ESSENCE OF RAMAYANA
Swami Sivananda

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RAMAYANA

Sri Swami Sivananda

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FOREWORD

Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's main purpose in life is to serve aspiring souls and humanity, and one of the forms it has taken has been the production of over three hundred books on almost all aspects of religion and culture of India.

Sri Swamiji has rightly called the Ramayana as being Dharma in theory and practice. It has influenced and moulded Indian life and thought for hundreds of years and is still a living force in the inner depths of Indian consciousness.

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ESSENCE

of

RAMAYANA

Section One

PRELIMINARY

EKASLOKI RAMAYANA

(Ramayana in One Verse)

Formerly Sri Rama went to the forest (where Rishis did penance) and killed the illusive deer. Sita was carried away and Jatayu was killed. (Rama) met Sugriva, killed Vali and crossed the ocean. The city of Lanka was burnt (by Hanuman). Ravana and Kumbhakarna were then killed. Thus (is recited) the holy Ramayana.

SALUTATIONS TO VALMIKI

I adore the lark Valmiki who, having climbed the high branch of poesy sings in nectarine accents the blessed and sweet Name of the Lord: "Rama, Rama, Rama."

RELATIONSHIP OF HANUMAN WITH SRI RAMA

Hanuman says: "Looked at from the point of view of the body I am Thy slave, from the point of view of the embodied self, a portion of Thy energy, from the point of view of the Atman, Thy own self. This is my settled belief."

THE KALPAKA TREE

The seat of all good things, the destroyer of the impurities of the Kali age, purer than purity itself, the food for the journey of the Mumukshus (aspirants) who have started on the pilgrimage to the supreme abode of bliss, the only resting place, the very life-breath of virtuous men, the sages say, is the Name of Sri Rama, the seed of the Kalpaka tree (wish-fulfilling tree).

SUMITRA'S INSTRUCTION TO LAKSHMANA

Look upon Sri Rama as King Dasaratha, Janaki as myself (Sumitra) and the forest as Ayodhya city. Go thou, my son (to the forest) and be happy.

SRI RAMA MANGALAM

1. Mangalam (auspiciousness and victory) to the king of the Kosalas, the ocean of great virtues, the son of the great emperor (Dasaratha) to (Sri Rama) the emperor.
2. To Him who is known through the Veda and Vedanta, to Him of the colour of the dark cloud, with a form enchanting to the eyes of men, to Him with meritorious fame, let us pronounce Mangalam.

3. Let us chant Mangalam to the Lord who was dear to sage Visvamitra, to Him with attractive form and fully ripe fruit of the fortune of the King of Mithila.
4. Mangalam to Ramabhadra, who was always devoted to his father, together with Sita, and his brothers and who delighted the whole world.
5. Mangalam unto the Lord who left Ayodhya and lived in Chitrakuta, adored by all sages, who was ever kind and brave.
6. May Mangalam be to my Lord who is worthy of being served at all times with devotion, the Lord who lived in the forest with Lakshmana and Janaki, with bows and arrows.
7. Mangalam to Him who lived in the Dandaka forest, who destroyed the enemies of the Devas, and who bestowed emancipation on the devoted king of birds, Jatayu.
8. Mangalam to the extremely amiable Rama who accepted with great love and affection the fruits and roots of Sabari and Him who is all-full and kind, who is all Sattva.
9. Mangalam to the great hero who was ever served by Hanuman, who fulfilled the desires of the devotee of Hari (Vibhishana) and who destroyed the wicked Vali.
10. Mangalam to the great hero Sri Raghava who crossed the ocean over a bridge, who overcame the Rakshasas in fight, who was chivalrous in battle.
11. Let us chant praises of Mangalam to the King of kings, Sri Ramabhadra, who, reaching the divine city of Ayodhya, was crowned together with Sita.

AHALYA'S PRAYER

Ever do I bow unto that Hari who has in this incarnation assumed a human shape and is called Rama, who is of a delightful form, who carried the bow, whose eyes are large like the lotus. I bow unto no other.

The dust of whose lotus-feet is to be sought for through the Vedas, from the lotus of whose navel sprang forth the lotus-seated Brahma, whose name is ever cherished by the God, Siva, that Ramachandra do 1 cherish in my heart day and night.

I take refuge in Him whose deeds in various incarnations are sung in the world of Brahma by Narada, Siva and Brahma and the rest, as well as by the goddess of speech with tears of joy running down her breasts.

This Rama is verily that supreme self-the ancient Purusha, the self-illumined, without limitation, beginning of all. Assuming a human form through Maya, he deludes the world. This is his supreme grace.

This Rama who is free, full and the self of all, is alone the cause of creation, preservation and destruction of the world. Through his Maya, he becomes reflected in the various attributes of goodness, activity and darkness and assumes the names of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.

Rama! Reverence to thy lotus-feet which were lovingly placed on her breast by Lakshmi. Only one of thy feet pervaded the three worlds in days of yore. They are now meditated upon by Munis devoid of egotism.

Thou art the beginning of the world. Thou art the world itself. Thou art the refuge of the world. Thou art unattached to everything, thou shinest as the supreme self of all.

O Rama! Thou art that which is expressed by the syllable OM. Thou art the Purusha, beyond the range of speech. Thou art verily the world itself.

Thou alone, O Rama, appearest under the various distinctions of effects, causes, actors, fruits of actions and means of attainment thereof, through thy Maya of many forms.

Deluded by Thy Maya, O Lord, people do not know Thee and think Thee who art the Lord of Maya to be a human personality.

Like Akasa thou art everywhere, inside and outside, undefiled, unattached, unmoving, ever permanent, ever awake and one without a second.

O Lord, how can I, a foolish and ignorant woman, know Thy true nature. Therefore, O Rama, with a single heart do I make hundreds of reverences to Thee. O Lord, wherever I may incarnate, may I always be attached to Thy lotus-feet and have firm devotion to Thee alone.

Reverence be to Thee, O thou chief of men! Salutations to Thee, O thou who art ever dear to thy devotees! Salutations to Thee! O thou Lord of the senses. Salutations to Thee, O Narayana! Salutations to Thee!

STORY OF VALMIKI

Thief Ratnakar became Valmiki Rishi. Ratnakar lived in the country of the Kiratas. He was brought up amongst them. He was a Brahmin only by birth. He was always devoted to the practices of a Sudra. He begot many sons through a Sudra woman. He became a thief when he was in the company of thieves. He destroyed many creatures. He always moved about with bow and arrow in hand.

Once he saw the seven Rishis in the forest and ran after them in order to plunder them. The Rishis said, “Why are you following us?” He said to them, “I have come to take away from you what you have. My many sons and wife are starving. I roam about in the hills and forests to maintain them.”

The Rishis said to Ratnakar, “Ask your people as follows: ‘Will each of you become a sharer in the sins which are committed by me daily?’ We shall remain here till you return after settling this point.”

Valmiki went home and duly repeated to his sons, wife, mother and father what the Rishis had told him. They said, “All the sins are yours. We shall share only what you bring. Ours are only the gains.”

On hearing this Ratnakar became disgusted and went to the place where the Rishis were sitting. His internal nature became purified by the mere sight of those Rishis.

He threw away his bow and arrow; prostrated himself before them and said, “Save me, O Rishis, I am sinking in the ocean of sin.” The Rishis took pity on Ratnakar and said, “Repeat always with a concentrated mind the divine Name ‘Rama, Rama’.” Ratnakar said, “I am unable to pronounce even that name. Please suggest me some other method.” The Rishis said, “If you cannot repeat ‘Rama, Rama’ then repeat Mara, Mara’.”

Ratnakar repeated this word with concentrated mind and forgot the outside world. He sat in the same place for a long time. An ant-hill accumulated around him.

At the end of a thousand Yugas those Rishis came back. They said to him, “Come out.” On hearing this he got up immediately. He came out of the ant-hill like the sun out of the mist. The Rishis said, “You are Valmiki because you are born a second time from an ant-hill.” So saying the Rishis departed.

Thus thief Ratnakar became Rishi Valmiki by his Tapas and repetition of the name of Sri Rama. Even the inverted repetition of syllables raised a thief to the status of divinity. How powerful is Sri Rama’s name. Glory to his name.

INTRODUCTION

The Ramayana

Salutations to the great Valmiki, Lord Rama and other heroes of the Ramayana, and Sri Sita Devi, a remembrance of whom removes all obstacles in life and bestows prosperity, auspiciousness and success in all undertakings.

The Ramayana of Valmiki is perhaps the most ancient and glorious epic in the world. It is known as the Adikavyam, the first poem.

Valmiki Ramayana contains 24,000 Slokas which have been grouped into 500 chapters and again into seven Kandas or sections: Bala, Ayodhya, Aranya, Kishkindha, Sundara, Yuddha and Uttara Kanda.

Ramayana is a marvellous book which contains the essence of all the Vedas and all sacred scriptures. It is a treasure for man. It is a reservoir which contains the nectar of immortality. It delineates the character of a son who renounced the throne and the pleasures of the world to fulfil the words of his father and lived in the forest for a period of fourteen years. It depicts the character of a father who sends even his most beloved son in exile in order to keep up his word. It delineates the character of an ideal, chaste wife who is devoted to her husband till the end of her life and shares the adversities of her husband and serves him untiringly in the forest, and who also regards her husband as her God. Above all, it also points the character of a brother who places brotherly affection above everything else in this world and follows his brother to the forest leaving all the pleasures of the palace, and leading the way to ward off all dangers.

In Sri Rama we find a dutiful son, an ideal husband and king. In Lakshmana we find an ideal brother who shares the joys and sorrows of his eldest brother in city and forest. Can a Hindu wife have a more nobler exemplar than the peerless Sita? The very names of these great personages produce a holy thrill in every Hindu heart and in. The hearts of all those who read the Ramayana.

Ramayana exercises a great moulding power on the life of man. It contains object lessons for husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and enemies.

Ramayana is highly beautiful, melodious and soul-stirring. It contains genuine classical Sanskrit poetry. Rama’s young sons, Kusa and Lava, were the first reciters who sang to music this reputed work. It can be easily understood even by boys. It is suitable for beginners in the study of Sanskrit. It contains the

highest ideals of Hindu culture and civilisation. It is a textbook of morals for the youths to inspire them to lofty and sublime ideals of conduct and character.

Ramayana is a book that is studied by all-man, woman or boy in India. The teachings of the sacred book are wrought into the very life of every Indian man, woman and boy. Mothers tell the stories to their children, teachers to their students, the old to the young. It is a non-detailed textbook for students in schools.

The description of nature in the Ramayana is most sublime and beautiful. One can actually feel that the hills, the rivers, the trees and the birds are really one with human joys and sorrows. The description of battle scenes is magnificent. The chief characteristic of the Ramayana is simplicity. Pathos and tenderness run through the whole poem. Poetry and morality are charmingly united. There is loftiness of moral tone.

Ramayana has historical basis. It is a book of great antiquity. It is not a mere allegoric poem. It is an inspiring and marvellous book for all times. It has loomed large for centuries over the destinies of many millions of people and will certainly continue to do so for ages to come.

Ramayana has been translated, both in verse and prose into Italian, French, English and Latin.

The sage Valmiki taught the Ramayana to his little disciples, Lava and Kusa who were the first to sing it to the world. They came in the garb of ascetics from the hermitage of their teacher and sang the wonderful poem in the presence of their father and other heroes of the story.

Those who study the Sundara Kanda daily with faith and devotion attain wealth, happiness, sons and prosperity.

Its Origin

Valmiki once asked Narada, “O venerable Rishi! Please tell me whether there is a perfect man in this world who is at once virtuous, dutiful, truthful, noble, steadfast in duty and kind to all beings.”

Narada replied, “There is such a one, a prince of Ikshvaku’s line, named Rama. He is virtuous, brave, gentle and wise. He is a great hero. He loves his subjects immensely. He is the protector of Dharma. He is firm and steadfast. He is just and liberal. He is well versed in the Vedas and in the science of arms. He is unique in the possession of virtues and matchless in beauty. He is an obedient son, a kind brother, a loving husband, a faithful friend, an ideal king, a merciful enemy and a lover of all living beings. All people adore him.”

Valmiki, reflecting over this glowing description, was walking along the banks of the river Tamasa. He happened to see a pair of Krounchas (birds) sporting with each other in love. Suddenly the male bird was shot dead by a cruel fowler and the female, seeing her mate rolling on the ground in the agony of pain, screamed out pitifully her lamentations. The sage felt great pity at the sight of the fallen bird and his grieving spouse and burst forth in the exclamation: “Never, O fowler, shalt thou obtain rest, as thou hast killed a Krouncha in the midst of his love.” These words came out spontaneously in the form of a musical verse having four feet of eight syllables each (Anushtup metre).

Then Brahma Himself, the creator of the world came before the poet and said, “Sing Rama’s charming story in the same melodious metre. As long as this world endures, as long as the stars shine in heaven,

so long shall thy song spread among men." So saying, Brahma vanished. He inspired the poet with the knowledge of Sri Rama's whole story.

Then Valmiki sat down in meditation and saw every event in Sri Rama's story in detail in his Yogic vision. Then he began to write the Ramayana. The melody of the Ramayana was born from the heart of love and pity for the wounded bird. When applied to the Ramayana, the verse of Valmiki, sung out of pity for the Krouncha, can be interpreted thus: Sri Rama and Sita represent the two birds; Ravana represents the cruel hunter. Sita was cruelly separated from Rama by the hunter Ravana. There is a slight similarity in both these cases. The hunter's cruel act was a forerunner to Valmiki's inspiration to narrate the Ramayana.

Its Characters

Sri Rama, the hero of Valmiki's Ramayana is an embodiment of every social and domestic virtue. His sense of filial duty is unparalleled in the history of the world. He was an ideal king and his government was styled as "Ramarajya," i.e., an ideal or perfect government. He was an ideal husband and father and a model of all the domestic virtues.

His adherence to duty was remarkable and illustrious. He even abandoned his wife who was his life, heart and soul and sacrificed his personal happiness to ensure the good of his subjects. He was prepared to sacrifice his very life even to secure the contentment of his people and to stick to duty.

He was endowed with inborn humility, noble generosity and largeness of heart. When Lakshmana referred to Rama the evil plot of Kaikeyi and Manthara, he passed it over and was ready to forgive the evil others had done unto him. His fortitude in calamities and adverse conditions was unique and matchless.

The word "Rama" means "he who sports in all beings." "Ramabhadra" means "good Rama." He is the supreme Purusha from the ideal of truth and duty set by Him.

Some people say: "Sri Rama is only an ordinary man. He is not an incarnation of God. He wept very bitterly when he lost his wife. His bewailing rent the clouds when his brother Lakshmana fell down on the ground in an unconscious state, being struck by the arrow of Indrajit. Why did Rama, the Supreme Being forget his real divine nature? He was sunk in the ocean of sorrow at the ordeal of Sita. If Rama always knew his true Self why did he grieve over the loss of Sita?"

The answer to this question is that verily Rama was the Supreme Self. He never moved or did anything. He was never subject to joy and sorrow, birth or death, pain or pleasure. Throughout his life, Rama behaved like an ordinary man because Ravana had a boon that he could not be killed by Devas, Asuras, Rakshasas, Yakshas, serpents, bears, etc. Ravana, in his pride, belittled the strength of man. Ravana could thus be killed only by a man. So Sri Rama had to show that he was an ordinary man only. He would not qualify for the destruction of Ravana if he exhibited himself to be God, according to the boon of Brahma.

Sri Rama is known as Maryada Purushottama. He adhered to the injunctions of the Sastras. He led the life of an ideal householder to teach the world the Dharma of a Grihastha. He never swerved an inch from truth and duty.

The period at which Sri Rama lived was the closing of Treta Yuga. Dvapara Yuga began when he departed from this world.

Sita is the heroine of the Ramayana. She is the ideal of womanhood itself. She never led a life of ease and comfort. She was serene and firm amidst sorrows and trials. She was matchless among women. She was put to very severe tests in which her purity, courage, patience and other virtues were severely tried and she came out nobly successful. She was the Hindu ideal of womanly virtues. She was the most charming picture of feminine excellence. Hindu women have glorious reputation for their disinterested love and self-sacrifice. Sita was a peerless embodiment of these virtues. She never thought of her own comforts and happiness. She lived to serve Sri Rama and make him happy.

Lava and *Kusa* were the little disciples of Valmiki Rishi. They were brought up under his direct guardianship. They were well-versed in the Vedas, music and the science of archery.

Lava was a boy-warrior. He was modest, noble, simple and guileless. He resembled his father in every respect, in his features and outward form. He possessed the same voice, the same modesty and the same natural dignity which his father had. He was bold and humble. He had the sense of duty to a high degree. He could not brook the overbearing attribute of his rival however great he might be. He paid his due respects to elders and Gurus.

Kusa was a worthy brother to Lava. The martial fire was burning in him. He also possessed noble qualities like his brother.

Ravana was a Rakshasa. Though he was a Rakshasa he was a Brahmin. He was a Rakshasa by Svabhava or nature. Despite his evil qualities he was a great Tapasvin and a great Sama-singer. He propitiated Lord Siva by chanting Sama verses along with the musical instrument whose strings were made out of his own nerves. Asuras and Rakshasas were famous for their Tapas. No one could compete with them in doing rigorous austerities. Hiranyakasipu did Tapas till all his flesh and fat were absorbed.

Ravana obtained a boon from Brahma Himself through his Tapas. The sun could not burn him, nor could the wind blow him. The mighty ocean dare not stir at his sight. He could not be slain by any being save man. In his pride Ravana did not include men among his opponents.

Although he was cruel, although he did atrocious and cruel deeds, yet he went to the abode of Vishnu. This clearly shows that he earned merits to ascend to Vishnu's heaven and he was a good devotee. Ravana was one of the attendants of Lord Vishnu in Vaikunta. He was cursed by the boy-saints Sanaka, Sananadna, etc., to undergo the miseries of worldly life in the earth-plane for three lives as opponent of Vishnu in each incarnation. Vishnu is so kind that he bestows immortality even to his bitterest enemies.

Adhyatma and Tulasidas

The Adhyatma Ramayana consists of 64 chapters and 4,200 verses. It also contains seven Kandas like the Ramayana of Valmiki. It is a part of the Brahmanda Purana. It treats of Bhakti and Jnana. It is a dialogue between Lord Siva and Parvati on the divinity of Sri Rama.

A devotee who associates his Lord with all auspicious attributes will not listen to any imperfections of his deity. Therefore the Adhyatma Ramayana speaks of the divinity of Sri Rama whereas the Ramayana of Valmiki describes Rama as the best of men and tries to show how man, despite his weaknesses, can

rise to the status of divinity by placing before him the noble ideals of truth and duty as Rama did. Nothing is known of the author of the book.

Tulasidas like the Adhyatma Ramayana, makes the real Sita enter the fire and an illusory Sita plays all the subsequent parts. He says in the Aranya Kanda thus: "After Lakshmana had repaired to the forest to gather roots and fruits Sri Rama said to Sita, 'Listen to me, O beloved Sita. I am going to play a wonderful act. Enter the fire till I have finished the annihilation of the Rakshasas.' Sita entered the fire and left only an image of herself (Maya Sita), of the same appearance and the same characteristics." But Lakshmana was not aware of this great mystery.

When Sita entered the fire after she was abandoned by Rama, both Tulasidas and the Adhyatma say that the illusory Sita only entered the fire. Tulasidas says, "The image and the social disgrace were alone burnt in the fire. No one knew the doings of the Lord. The gods, men and Rishis all remained looking."

The vast majority of people do not study Ramayana with faith and reverence, under great souls. They jump to hasty conclusions by mere superficial reading of the Ramayana here and there. They read the epic like reading novels with the attitude of curiosity-mongering and cavilling spirit. That is the reason why they are not able to comprehend the truths, the depths and secrets of the Ramayana.

The allegoric meaning of Ramayana is this: Ravana represents Ahamkara or egoism. His ten heads represent the ten senses. The city of Lanka is the nine-gated city the physical body. Vibhishana corresponds to intellect. Sita is peace. Rama is Jnana. To kill the ten-headed Ravana is to kill the egoism and curb the senses. To recover Sita is to attain peace which the Jiva has lost on account of desires. To attain Jnana is to have Darshan of Rama or the Supreme Self.

He who crosses the ocean of Moha and destroys the Rakshasas, Raga and Dvesha (likes and dislikes), is a Yogi who is united with Santi or peace, ever resting in Atman and enjoying the eternal bliss of the soul. He is an Atma-Rama.

Sri Rama stands for the "Good" (Sattva); Ravana for the "Evil". Sri Rama and Ravana fought with each other. Eventually Sri Rama became victorious. Positive always overcomes the negative. Good always overcomes evil.

Science of Astras

This is the divine science. This is Dhanur Veda. Lord Siva, Lord Krishna, Lord Rama are Lords of this supreme science. Parasurama learnt this from Lord Siva. Dronacharya, Kripacharya, Arjuna, Bhishma and Visvamitra were experts in this science. Bhishma learnt this from Parasurama. Indra also is an adept in this science.

The arrow is charged with the Mantra. It is the Mantra that does all the work. Mark how powerful is a Mantra. Each Mantra is filled with countless divine potencies. The nature of the work done by an arrow depends upon the Sankalpa of one who sends the arrow. One may aim at the destruction of a particular man or place. One may protect oneself with a cage of arrows.

The sum total of all bombs of the present day such as incendiary bombs, flashlight bombs, high explosive bombs and the rest are nothing before a Brahmastra, a Pasupatastra or a Narayanastra. These Astras can burn the three worlds. Unfortunately this divine science has become extinct at the present moment.

The Mohanastra will make a man unconscious. Gandharvastra will delude a man. This produces delusion.

Sri Rama sent an Astra on Ravana's party. All the Rakshasas appeared as Rama. They killed one another.

Ravana discharged on Rama the Nagastra arrows that became serpents full of poison. The arrows had their mouths like serpents and vomited forth fire all round. Then Rama discharged Garudastra. The arrows became Garudas and cut off the serpent arrows on all sides. Garudas are the enemies of serpents. Garuda nullifies the effect of Nagastra.

Parvatastra gives protection against Vayuastra. It is like a shield. Sri Rama threw Maricha into the ocean with the Manavastra.

If one throws away one's bow and arrow and bows before the Narayanastra that Astra will not produce any effect. This is called Astra Santi. Withdrawal of Astra is called Upasamhara. Arjuna sent his Brahmastra on Asvatthama and withdrew it together with the Brahmastra discharged by Asvatthama who was unable to withdraw it.

The ancient heroes or warriors of India used Astras or weapons of various kinds in the war such as the Nagastra, Agneyastra, Varunastra, Pasupatastra, Vayuastra, Vajrastra, Gandharvastra, Mohanastra, Indrastra, Garudastra, Narayanastra, Ardha-chandrastra, Devastra, Parvatastra, Manavastra, Vijnanastra and Brahmastra. Indrajit directed Nagastra on Lakshmana which made him senseless and bound him. Sri Rama used Brahmastra to kill Ravana. This is the weapon of the highest potency. This is charged with Gayatri Mantra recited in the reverse order. Asvatthama and Arjuna used Brahmastra against each other. Even a piece of straw charged with Mantra becomes a powerful weapon. It is the Mantra that does the work. Mark how much there is in a Mantra! Varunastra is water weapon that will neutralise the effects of Agneyastra, the fire weapon.

General

One is surprised when one reads in the Ramayana that Sri Rama had an army of monkeys. They begin to question: "Why should Rama have an army of monkeys? Can monkeys talk and do intelligent things which can be done only by human beings?"

The monkeys were all incarnations of the Devas. Sugriva was an Amsa of Surya. Hanuman was the son of Vayu. Vali was an Amsa of Agni. Nala was an Amsa of Visvakarma.

Once Ravana ridiculed Nandi. He said to Nandi, "Your face is like that of a monkey." Nandi pronounced a curse upon Ravana and said, "Your city of Lanka will be burnt and destroyed by monkeys." Therefore the Devas had to take the form of monkeys.

Ramalila is celebrated every year in almost all the principal towns of Upper India in the month of Asvin. It reminds the Hindu of the story of Rama and attracts thousands of people everywhere. If the actors are of good character, the staging of the drama would produce a most marvellous influence on the minds of the people.

Generally professional people do this performance with a mercenary spirit. Boys and girls with no character act the part of Rama and Sita. Therefore no influence is produced on the audience. People

flock to hear some music and spend the time in some sort of amusement. Good Sannyasins and Sadhus should take part in enacting Ramalila. Then it would be a blessing to the people.

In Kali Yuga, most of the illiterate persons are devotional and they are all doing some kind of Tapas, Japa, prayer and meditation. Hindu ladies are devotional in their very nature. The Hindu religion is maintained through the devotional nature of Hindu ladies. Devotion to God is a peculiar characteristic of a Hindu lady. It is only those who have imbibed western education and have scientific knowledge who have become confirmed atheists. They have no faith in chanting Mantra. Their fate is highly deplorable. Justice Woodroffe has written a most valuable book entitled "Garland of Letters". There he has treated this subject quite rationally. The only remedy for them to acquire devotion is Satsanga. Satsanga will overhaul their worldly nature, change their materialistic Samskaras and infuse genuine Bhakti. Hear the famous couplet of Tulasidas:

Bin Satsang Viveka Na Hoi

Rama Kripa Bin Sulabha Na Soi.

The grace of Rama cannot be obtained without the help of Satsanga and discrimination.

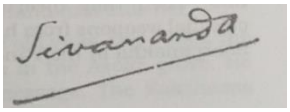
Japa of Rama Mantra is of three kinds, viz., mental, low or semi-verbal, loud or vocal. The repetition of low Japa gives a reward a thousand times more than verbal. The mental Japa gives a reward a crore times more than verbal.

May the blessings of the bow-holder of Ayodhya ever be upon us all!

This "Essence of Ramayana" may be read easily by even the busiest man who finds no time to go through the voluminous original texts. Long details have been condensed nicely in this book.

Glory to that immortal Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana! Glory to Ramayana, the most sacred book in the world! Glory to Sri Rama, the hero and Sri Sita, the heroine of this celebrated epic! May their blessings be upon you all!

Ananda Kutir, 25th July, 1943



Section Two

SYNOPSIS OF THE SEVEN KANDAS

1. BALA KANDA

Hari Om!

Rama helps Visvamitra by guarding his sacrifice. He slays Tataka and Subahu. He frees Ahalya from the curse. He breaks the bow of Siva and marries Janaki. He annihilates the pride of Parasurama.

2. AYODHYA KANDA

Preparations are made for installing Rama as the heir apparent. His step-mother Kaikeyi stands in the way and sends him into exile. Raja Dasaratha becomes very much afflicted at heart on account of his separation from Rama and dies on account of grief. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are entertained by Guha, a hunter-chief. They cross the Ganga and meet the Rishi Bharadvaja. They then go to Chitrakoota on the advice of the Rishi. They build a cottage made of grass and leaves there. Bharata comes and asks Rama to return and take back the administration of his kingdom. Rama refuses. Then Bharata returns and takes Rama's sandals. He places the sandals on the throne and rules the kingdom in the name of Sri Rama. He himself lives at Nandigram.

3. ARANYA KANDA

Viradha, a giant, attacks them in the Dandaka forest. Rama kills him. They then pay a visit to the Rishis Sarabhanga, Suteekshna and Atri. Anasuya, wife of Atri, gives an inspiring discourse on the duties of a wife to Sita. Then they meet Rishi Agastya. Rama receives celestial weapons from him. They encounter the giantess Soorpanakha in the Panchavati forest. She is disfigured by Lakshmana, who cuts off her nose and ears. Khara and Trisiras, brothers of Soorpanakha, were very much enraged. They fought against Rama and Lakshmana. They were slain in the battle.

Maricha, uncle of Ravana, assumed the form of a golden deer and appeared before them. Sita requests Rama to get the deer for her. Rama proceeds to catch the deer and kills it. Ravana carries away Sita in the absence of Rama and Lakshmana. Jatayu, the king of the vultures, challenges Ravana, but he is mortally wounded. Sri Rama obtains all the information about Sita from the dying Jatayu. He is very much afflicted at heart. Subsequently Rama and Lakshmana kill Kabandha near the lake Pampa. Then they meet the pious Sabari. She offers them roots and fruits.

4. KISHKINDHA KANDA

Sri Rama meets Hanuman on the banks of Pampa. They proceed to Mount Rishyamuka and make an alliance with Sugriva. Sugriva kills Vali with the help of Sri Rama and he is crowned the king of Kishkindha. Rama consoles Tara.

Thereupon Hanuman with a party of monkeys proceeds in search of Sita. He takes with him the ring of Sri Rama as a token. He makes a vigorous search and is not able to find Sita. Jambavan finds Sampati, brother of Jatayu, in a cave. Hanuman climbs up the top of a hill on his direction and from there he leaps across the ocean.

5. SUNDARA KANDA

Mainaka, an island peak, invites Hanuman to rest on its top at the request of the ocean. In his aerial journey Simhika, a monstress of the ocean, drags him down by catching his shadow. Hanuman kills her.

Then he gets a distant view of Lanka and enters the city at night. He finds out Sita in the Asoka grove. He gives her Rama's token and message. The Rakshasas imprison Hanuman. Hanuman frees himself and sets fire to Lanka. He returns to the place where Rama is staying and gives Sita's gem to Sri Rama. Sri Rama is highly delighted when he receives Sita's token and message.

6. YUDDHA KANDA

Nala builds a bridge across the sea on the advice of the ocean. The heroes with a large army of monkeys cross the ocean and reach Lanka. Vibhishana joins them and tells them how to destroy Ravana and his army. Kumbhakarna, Indrajit and Ravana are killed in battle. Sita is rescued. Vibhishana is then crowned as king.

Sri Rama, with his party returns to Ayodhya in the flying car called Pushpaka. Rama is crowned as Emperor. The people of his kingdom feel extremely happy.

Sita's honour is tested in the fire. She comes out more glorious and effulgent than ever.

7. UTTARA KANDA

Sri Rama's reign is called Rama Rajya. There is righteousness everywhere. Everywhere there are plenty and prosperity. There are neither dacoits nor thieves. There is neither disease nor sorrow. There is no cheating in the markets and shops. There is no adultery. The pilgrims visit safely the sacred places and shrines. Property and life are quite safe. A purse of gold may be exposed without danger in the midst of a highway.

The four castes duly observe their Dharmas. Sri Rama goes back to His supreme abode after a long and prosperous rule.

Section Three

THE RAMAYANA

BALA KANDA

Hari Om!

Ravana oppressed the people very much. The earth assumed the form of a cow and went to Brahma together with the gods and Munis, with tears in her eyes. Brahma went to Hari with the cow, the gods and the Munis and said, “O Lord, Ravana, the grandson of Pulastya has become proud of the boon that he has acquired from me. He has become a great tyrant. He has become a source of trouble to the three worlds and the protectors. He can only be killed by a man. Do thou, therefore, incarnate as man and kill that enemy of the gods.”

Lord Hari said, “Kasyapa did Tapas. I was pleased with him and granted him a boon according to which I was to be born as his son. He is now born as Dasaratha. I shall be born as his son through Kausalya on an auspicious day. I shall divide myself into four portions and incarnate separately as such. My Yoga Maya will be born as Sita in the house of Janaka.”

So saying, Lord Hari vanished. Brahma said to the gods, “Lord Hari shall incarnate as man in the family of Raghus. You all should incarnate as monkeys and serve Hari.”

Brahma consoled the earth and the gods and went away to his abode. The gods then assumed the form of monkeys on the earth. They were waiting for the coming of Lord Vishnu.

Birth of Rama

Salutations to Lord Rama, who is an Avatara of Vishnu, who is measureless, who is of the nature of bliss and pure intelligence, who is the consort of Sita, master of Sri Hanuman and the Lord of the three worlds, who took his birth at his own will to establish righteousness, destroy the wicked and to protect his devotees.

The gods, the Gandharvas, Siddhas and the holy Rishis approached Brahma and said, “O venerable Lord, the demon Ravana is harassing us in various ways through his power on account of your boon to him. We are not able to check him. Please protect us.”

In the meanwhile Lord Hari arrived. He said to the gods, “O gods, be not afraid. I shall incarnate on earth to protect you all and destroy the wicked Ravana.”

Lord Vishnu divided Himself into four portions and chose King Dasaratha for his father.

King Dasaratha who was endowed with good fortune, who was devoted to truth, who was very brave and famous was without a son. He was very much troubled in his heart. He approached his family preceptor, Vasishtha and said, “O my venerable Master, I have no issue to carry on the line. I am troubled with the sorrow of being childless.”

Vasishtha said, “O righteous king, you will beget four mighty sons. Bring Rishyasringa, the husband of Santa. Perform at once the sacrifice called the Putrakameshti.”

Dasaratha brought the Rishi to Ayodhya and performed the sacrifice. The god of fire appeared from the fire of sacrifice. He had a golden vessel full of divine Payasa. He said, “O best of kings, take this Payasa made by the gods in heaven. Give it to your worthy wives. You will beget mighty sons by them.”

Dasaratha obtained the permission of Vasishtha and Rishyasringa and shared the Payasa equally between his queens Kausalya and Kaikeyi. Sumitra also went there. She also wanted to take a portion of the Payasa. Kausalya joyfully gave her half of her share. Kaikeyi also gave her half of her share with great joy. All the queens became pregnant.

In the tenth month Kausalya gave birth to a son of superhuman form. On the ninth lunar day of the bright half of the month of Chaitra, under the star Punarvasu and Lagna Karkataka (auspicious zodiacal sign of Cancer), with the five constellations in the ascendent, there appeared on earth the great and prosperous Sri Rama with mighty arms, the eternal Lord, the Master of the world, the joy of Dasaratha. He bore all the auspicious marks on his fair body. He wore a yellow robe. He had four arms. Ear-rings were waving in his ears. He wore a crown. His form was effulgent like a thousand suns. He was carrying the conch, the discus, the mace and the lotus. He wore a garland of wild flowers. He wore armlets, anklets and the Srivatsa mark.

Bharata was born to Kaikeyi. Sumitra gave birth to two sons, twins Lakshmana and Satrughna. At their birth the Gandharvas sang and the Apsaras danced in joy. There was a shower of flowers from above.

King Dasaratha gave the Brahmins a thousand villages, gold, clothes, jewels and cows. He performed the ceremony of Jatakarma (birth ceremony).

Vasishtha conferred the names. Kausalya’s son was named Rama because he gave joy and happiness to all, because the Munis found in him delight, and knowledge to cross this ocean of ignorance.

Bharata was so named because he protected all. Lakshmana was so named because he was endowed with auspicious attributes. Satrughna was given that name as he was the destroyer of enemies.

Lakshmana was intensely attached to Sri Rama even from his early infancy. He carried out the wishes of Rama. He never ate anything unless Rama partook of it first. When Rama went out hunting Lakshmana always followed him with bow in his hand. He could not even sleep without the company of Rama. Lakshmana was like the shadow of Rama. They were inseparable.

Satrughna was highly devoted to Bharata. Both dined together and put on the same kind of dress. Lakshmana was attached to Rama, and Satrughna to Bharata, according to the portions of the Payasa given to their mother by Kausalya and Kaikeyi respectively.

All the sons were heroic and virtuous. They were well versed in the Vedas. Sri Rama was an expert in archery. They were also very well trained in horsemanship, in encounters with sword and shield, in warcraft and kingcraft.

Sri Rama excelled his brothers in bravery and truthfulness. These princes were extremely handsome, strong, virtuous, holy and contented from their very boyhood. They were patient, brave, truthful and firm. The princes soon captivated the hearts of the people.

Rama Slays Tataka, Maricha and Subahu

Once upon a time the Rishi Visvamitra came to Ayodhya to see Rama. He said to Dasaratha, "I wish to perform a sacrifice but whenever I begin it the Rakshasas, Maricha and Subahu, obstruct it. Give me thy eldest son Rama for the purpose of killing them."

King Dasaratha became anxious. He consulted Vasishtha. "If Rama departs from here I shall not live. What shall I do? If I refuse to give Visvamitra my son, he will curse me."

Sri Vasishtha said, "Hear, O king! Rama is no human being. He is the eternal Supreme Being. Brahma solicited Vishnu for lessening the burden of the earth. Vishnu is born in thy house through Kausalya. Thou wert formerly Kasyapa Prajapathi, the son of Brahma and Kausalya was Aditi, the mother of the gods. Both of you did rigorous penance and meditated on Lord Hari.

Vishnu was highly pleased and requested you to ask for a boon. You said, 'Do thou be my son.' Lord Hari said, 'Be it so.' Verily Vishnu is born as Rama. Lakshmana is Sesha. Bharata and Satrughna are the conch and the discus. The mother of the world, the Yoga Maya is born as Sita, the daughter of Janaka. Visvamitra has come to unite her with Rama. This is the mystery of the gods. Therefore thou shouldst send Rama and Lakshmana with great joy along with Visvamitra."

Then King Dasaratha asked his two sons to follow Visvamitra. They started with bows, arrows, quivers and swords. Rama was less than sixteen years of age when he proceeded to kill the Rakshasas. Rishi Visvamitra taught them on the way the two celestial sciences known as Bala and Atibala. He who knows these sciences is not troubled by hunger and lassitude.

The text of the Mantra is: "Thou shalt not feel tired nor deluded, nor shalt thou be deformed, nor shall Rakshasas attack thee sleeping or under the influence of intoxication. There is no one equal to thee in the three worlds in skill, knowledge, auspiciousness and strength of intellect. There shall be no one equal to thee in giving ready answers to all questions."

Then they crossed the Ganga and came to the forest where Tataka lived. Visvamitra said to Rama, "Here lives Tataka, a Rakshasi who can assume various forms at will. She is the wife of Sunda, the son of Jambha. She possesses the strength of a thousand elephants. She devastated the flourishing cities of Malada and Karush. Her son is called Maricha. He was born as a Rakshasa on account of a curse. She is the terror of men. She has a large mouth and strong arms. Formerly there was a powerful Yaksha named Suketu. He was pure. He practised rigorous penance. Brahma was highly pleased with his Tapas and conferred upon him a daughter endowed with the strength of a thousand elephants. She is Tataka.

"Once Agastya Rishi destroyed Sunda. Tataka with her son ran to devour Agastya. The Rishi cursed Maricha saying, 'Do thou become a Rakshasa.' He also cursed Tataka saying, 'As you came to devour me, may you quickly become a Rakshasi of terrible form.'

"Do thou, O valiant Rama, destroy this terrible Rakshasi for the welfare of Brahmins and cows. You shouldn't shrink from killing her in the interest of the four orders of castes, simply from the consideration that she is a woman. An act may be cruel or sinful and yet it should be done by a ruler in order to protect his subjects. This is the eternal rule of conduct for those who are engaged in ruling a kingdom. In ancient times Indra also killed Manthara, the daughter of Virochana, when she attempted to destroy the world. In days of yore Lord Hari killed Kavya's mother, the devoted wife of Bhrigu Rishi,

when she desired the destruction of Indra at the request of the Asuras. Gods and princes have destroyed many wicked women. Therefore, O Rama, kill this wicked woman and abandon your prejudice against killing a woman. Tataka is highly wicked and impious. Kill her before dusk, because the Rakshasas become terrible when darkness sets in. In the three worlds none but you can dare to kill this wicked and mighty Rakshasi."

Rama replied, "O mighty Rishi, my father has asked me at the time of coming, to obey you implicitly in all your commands. Therefore I shall kill Tataka in the interest of all people."

Sri Rama took up his formidable bow and twanged the bow-string. Tataka rushed towards Rama with uplifted arms and thundering roar. She raised a cloud of dust from the ground and began to shower stones on Sri Rama. Lakshmana chopped off her nose and ears. Thereupon she assumed various forms and began to shower stones. She became almost invincible. Rama then pierced her chest with arrows and she dropped down dead.

Then she became a handsome Yaksha woman decked with ornaments. She was freed from the curse of Agastya by the grace of Rama. She bowed and circumambulated Rama and went to heaven with his permission.

Visvamitra embraced Rama and taught him the whole science of Astra together with all the Mantras.

Visvamitra started his sacrifice for six days. The hermits told Rama and Lakshmana to protect the forest. Rama and Lakshmana with bows in hand guarded the forest day and night. Maricha and Subahu began to rain clots of blood and bones on the sacrificial altar. Sri Rama hurled at the chest of Maricha, the powerful Manavastra which threw him into the ocean. Then he took the Agneyastra and aimed it at the chest of Subahu. Subahu fell dead on the ground.

Deliverance of Ahalya

Rama then said, "O venerable Guru, this hermitage looks like a deserted one. I wish to know all about this." Visvamitra said, "This hermitage once belonged to the great Muni Gautama. He used to practise austerities here with his wife Ahalya, daughter of Brahma, who was remarkable throughout the world for her beauty and devotion to her husband's service.

"One day when Gautama Muni had gone out of the Ashram, Indra approached her in the guise of Gautama Muni. He visited her and was coming out of the Ashram. In the meantime Gautama Muni also returned to the Ashram and saw Indra coming out disguised as himself. He became very angry and asked him, 'O vile wretch, who art thou who hast assumed my form?' Indra replied, I am the king of the gods. Do thou save me, the slave of lust. 1 have committed a highly blamable deed. I am of vile intellect now.' Gautama pronounced a curse on Indra: You will become sexless.' Then he said to Ahalya: You will live in this hermitage fixed on a slab of stone unseen by others. You will live on air only. You will bear sun, wind, rain and the like. Engage yourself day and night in austerities. Meditate with one-pointed mind on Sri Rama. When Sri Rama shall visit the Ashram and tread the stone upon which you are fixed, you will be purified of sin. Worshipping Rama with faith and circumambulating him and bowing unto him, you shall be freed from this curse, you will get back your original form and will serve me happily as before.'

"So saying, Gautama Muni went to the Himalaya. Since that time Ahalya is sitting in this Ashram unseen by all creatures, living on air and waiting for the touch of the dust of thy lotus-feet. Do thou purify

Ahalya, the daughter of Brahma." Then Rama touched the stone with his feet. Ahalya remembered the words of her husband and worshipped Sri Rama duly with Arghya and the rest. She prostrated herself at the feet of Rama and praised him. She circumambulated Rama and then went to her husband with Rama's permission.

The Marriage of Rama

Then Visvamitra said to Rama and Lakshmana, "We will now go to Mithila that is ruled by Janaka." They all went to cross the Ganga. The boatman stopped them and said, "O Lord, I shall wash thy lotus-feet before thou placest them on the boat. Thy feet have the power of transforming a stone into a woman. I shall take thee to the other shore after washing thy feet. If I allow thee to enter the boat without washing thy feet this boat will be changed into a woman and I will be deprived of the means of maintaining my family." So saying, he washed the feet of Sri Rama. Thereupon he took them to the other bank of the Ganga.

They all went to Mithila. Janaka paid due respects. Visvamitra then introduced Sri Rama and Lakshmana to Janaka and told Janaka all about Rama, his adventures and heroic feats. He said that Sri Rama had come to see the great bow of Lord Siva which he had received from the gods as a reward for his sacrifice. "I have heard that the bow which is worshipped by thee has been seen by many kings. Show that bow to Sri Rama," said Visvamitra.

Five hundred men carried the bow. It was adorned with a hundred bells, diamonds and gems. The chief minister showed it to Sri Rama. Sri Rama took hold of it by the left hand and balanced it, as in sport. He then put the string to it and drew it a little with his right hand and broke it in the presence of the kings. The gods showered flowers on Rama. Raja Janaka embraced Sri Rama. Then Sita came with a golden necklace and put it on the neck of Sri Rama with great joy.

Raja Janaka asked Visvamitra to send a letter at once to Raja Dasaratha to come to Mithila with his sons, wives and ministers for the marriage of the princes. Visvamitra despatched messengers to Ayodhya at once. Raja Dasaratha ordered his ministers to prepare immediately to go to Mithila.

Thereupon Dasaratha reached Mithila with his Guru Vasishtha and the party.

Then, upon an auspicious day, under an auspicious constellation in an auspicious hour the marriage of Rama and Sita was celebrated. Janaka said, "I give Sita to thee, O Rama! Do thou be pleased." So saying, he placed the hand of Sita over the hand of Rama. Then he gave his daughter Urmila to Lakshmana. He also gave Srutakirti and Mandavi, his brother's daughters, to Satrughna and Bharata respectively.

Janaka then related to Vasishtha and Visvamitra the manner of his daughter's birth as related to him by Rishi Narada. Janaka said, "Sita appeared in the furrows when the ground for sacrifice was purified by ploughing. I took her for my own daughter and gave her to my wife. Once when I was sitting alone, Narada came to me. He said to me: Lord Hari has incarnated as Rama for the purpose of showing grace to His devotees and doing the work of the gods and destroying Ravana. The Yoga Maya is Sita, born in thy house. Thou shouldst give Sita to Rama only and to no one else. She is ordained to be the wife of Sri Rama.' So saying, he went away. I have looked upon Sita as Lakshmi. I have reflected within myself: How shall I give Sita to Rama?' Then I thought of an expedient: The bow which was thrown by Siva after burning Tripura was formerly placed in my grandfather's house. Let that bow be made the stake for the hand of Sita in order to annihilate the pride of all.'

"Through thy grace, O best of Rishis, Sri Rama came here to see the bow. My object of life has been accomplished, when I see Rama sitting on the same seat with Sita."

Janaka praised Sri Rama and gave rich presents to the sons of Dasaratha.

King Dasaratha, with his Guru, ministers, sons and Sita started back to Ayodhya with great joy.

Fight with Parasurama

Sri Rama met Parasurama on the way. Parasurama said, "O Rama, if thou art a Kshatriya, have a duel with me. Thou hast broken an old and worn-out bow. In vain dost thou take pride in thy strength. I am the destroyer of Kshatriyas. If thou stringest this bow of Vishnu, then I shall have a duel with thee. Otherwise I shall kill all of you."

Sri Rama snatched away the bow and arrows of Vishnu from the hand of Parasurama and immediately strung it. He took out an arrow from the quiver and put it on the bow. While drawing the bow he said to Parasurama, "O Brahmin, show me a mark to shoot at. My arrow is unfailing. I shall not slay thee, but will either rob thee of the power of motion or banish thee from those high regions to which thou hast attained through thy penance."

Sri Parasurama said, "O Rama, I know thee to be the supreme Lord. In my childhood I worshipped Lord Vishnu and did rigorous penance. Lord Hari said, Possessed of divine energy do thou kill Kartaviryas who killed thy father and the host of Kshatriyas twenty-one times. Having given the whole of the earth to Kasyapa do thou have peace. In the Treta Yuga I shall incarnate as Rama and take away the power which I give to thee.' So saying, Lord Hari vanished.

"Salutations to thee, O Rama! Thou art Lord Vishnu. The energy that was in me is now placed in thee. My object in life has been accomplished. O Lord, whatever good actions have been done by me with the object of conquering the world, let them be marks for Thy arrow. The various higher regions which I have earned through my penance may be cancelled for me. Let me have single-minded devotion unto Thee alone."

Then Lord Rama said to Parasurama, "I am highly pleased with thee. I shall give you all that thou desirest."

Parasurama said, "Let me always have firm devotion to Thee. Let me always have the company of those who are devoted to Thee.

"O Lord, do Thou discharge Thy arrow. I shall go to the Mahendra mountain, having destroyed my good and evil Karmas through this. There is no shame in my being defeated by Thee, as Thou art the Lord of the three worlds."

Rama then discharged the arrow. Parasurama lost his merit. Seeing the destruction by Sri Rama of the regions earned by his penance, the son of Jamadagni proceeded quickly to the Mahendra mountain.

Thereupon King Dasaratha went to his kingdom with his sons and ministers. The sons of Dasaratha lived happily.

The Lord of all the worlds whose incarnation is for bringing happiness to those who are devoted to Him, who is always associated with Sree, who is without decay, whose power is illimitable, who is Self-

luminous, eternal and all-pervading and whom Maya cannot overpower, who does all through Maya, who is the ruler of all, whose attributes and glory are known only to the upholders of the world like Brahma and the rest, though appearing to act as a human being, is Sri Rama who lives in Ayodhya in the company of Sita.

AYODHYA KANDA

King Dasaratha said to Vasishtha, "I have become old. The ministers, the citizens, and the Rishis, the knowers of the Vedas, repeatedly praise Rama. Therefore I shall install Rama as the heir-apparent. Bharata and Satrughna have gone to see their maternal uncle."

He called his minister Sumantra and said, "Collect all the things necessary for the ceremony. Do whatever Sri Vasishtha instructs you to do. Tomorrow I shall install Rama as Yuvaraja."

The minister acted in accordance with the commands of the preceptor.

King Dasaratha then asked Sumantra to fetch Sri Rama in his presence. Sri Rama appeared before his father. Then Dasaratha said to Rama, "You are highly qualified and I love you most. You shall ascend the throne tomorrow."

A friend of Rama informed Kausalya of this glad tiding.

All the highways were swept and watered. All the houses were decorated with flags, garlands and festoons. The whole city was anxiously waiting for the morning to witness the coronation ceremony.

Vasishtha informed the king that all his directions had been carried out.

Rama fasted with Janaki, controlled his senses and slept on a bed of Kusa grass.

Queen Kaikeyi had brought up an orphan girl whom she picked up from her maternal uncle's home. Her name was Manthara. She was the maid-servant of Kaikeyi.

Early in the morning Manthara ascended the terrace of the palace to find out the cause of the unusual jubilation in the city. She found the streets all sprinkled with water. She saw temples and houses adorned with flags and festoons. She was eager to know the cause of this great delight of the people. She asked the nurse, "Tell me, what is the cause of this great joy of the people? What is the king going to do today?"

The nurse informed the hunch-backed Manthara, "Today, the king will install Rama as Yuvaraja."

The crooked Manthara approached Kaikeyi, who was sleeping and said, "Rise, for King Dasaratha is going to install Rama as Yuvaraja. The evil-minded king, after sending Bharata to your relations is going to put Rama on the throne in the morning. You will be deprived of all rights and privileges. You will have no freedom. You will have to obey the behests of Kausalya. Claim your rights."

Kaikeyi replied, "What shall I do now?"

Manthara said, "Ask for the fulfilment of the two boons which your husband once promised to you when you served him in the war between the gods and the Asuras, when he received wounds all over

the body. Adopt this trick. Lie on the bare ground. Wear dirty clothes. Pretend to be angry and breathless. To please you the king will give you even his life. He is very much attached to you. He may even enter the fire for your sake. Tell him to banish Rama in exile for fourteen years and install Bharata on the throne. Ask for these two boons. Do not accept anything else."

Kaikeyi acted accordingly. Dasaratha said. "O Kaikeyi, what has Rama done to offend thee? Day and night thou speakest of the good qualities of Sri Rama, Thou hast spoken before: 'Looking upon me and Kausalya equally he always serves me.' Let Rama live in the palace. Take thou the sovereignty for thy son. I may even abandon Kausalya or Sumitra or even kingship or my own life itself, but I cannot abandon Rama who is highly devoted to me."

The cruel Kaikeyi replied, "Honour your promise, Be truthful. Truth is the highest Dharma. I will not be satisfied with anything but the banishment of Rama."

Dasaratha said to Sumantra, "I wish to see Rama. Bring him here quickly." Rama came at once and bowed down at his father's feet. Rama enquired of Kaikeyi as to the cause of the king's distress.

Kaikeyi said to Rama, "Thou alone art the means of removing the king's distress. There is something to be done by thee for his good. The king once gave me two boons. He is ashamed to speak to you. He is bound by the noose of truth. Thou shouldst save him now."

Rama replied, "Why art thou telling me this? I shall give up even my life, jump into the fire or drink poison for the sake of my father. He who does his father's work without being told is the best of sons. He who does his father's bidding is middling. He who does not do his father's bidding is not a son but the refuse of a son. I shall therefore do all that my father tells me to do. Truly, truly, I shall do it. Rama never speaks twice or two contrary things."

Then Kaikeyi said, "The king once gave me two boons. Fulfil the king's promise. Save your father. Bharata will rule the kingdom. You must go to the forest in exile for fourteen years."

Sri Rama said, "Let Bharata rule the kingdom. I shall go to the Dandaka forest, wearing matted locks and deer skin to keep the promise of the king. For the sake of Bharata, without being asked, I shall abandon Sita, the kingdom, my life and possessions. There is no higher duty to perform than serving one's father and carrying out his words."

Thereupon Sri Rama went to his mother to take permission. He said to his mother, "O venerable mother, do not sink in distress. Dear father wants to give the kingdom to Bharata and banish me to the Dandaka forest in order to keep his promise to Kaikeyi."

Kausalya fell on the ground in an unconscious state when she heard this heart-rending news. After some time she regained her consciousness and said, "O Rama, if you were not born I would have been a sonless woman but not subject to severe grief like this. My only sorrow would have been my barrenness."

Lakshmana said, "O noble mother, Rama being bound by the words of a woman should not abandon his sovereignty and go to the forest. Who can abandon his son who is equal to the gods, dear even to his enemies? I am truly attached to my brother. Should Rama enter the fire or the forest, be sure I shall have entered there before him. I shall bind Bharata who is deluded and is under the influence of Kaikeyi, and kill his relations and maternal uncles."

Kausalya said, “If thou, O Rama, art truly going to the forest then take me also. How can I live without thee even for a moment? Let the king give the kingdom to Bharata, but why does he order thee, who art dear to him, to go to the forest? What hast thou done to offend Kaikeyi or the king? Let him grant boons to Kaikeyi. If thy father is thy master, I, thy mother am even greater than him. If he tells thee to go to the forest, I tell thee not to go. I do not give permission. You should not go to the forest. Without you life is of no use to me. I cannot live among my co-wives. Take me also to the forest.”

Sri Rama said, “There is nothing more cruel for a woman than to desert her husband. To attend upon and to serve one’s husband are doubtless the highest duty of a woman. So long as a woman lives, her husband is her only Lord or master. The woman who does not serve her husband, shall not do well in the next world, although she practises fasts and other religious rites. But if she serves her husband she attains heaven. Even if a woman has never bowed to the gods and has stopped to worship them, she obtains the highest heaven by serving her husband. A woman should be absorbed in the service of her husband. This is the duty of a woman as prescribed by the Vedas and the Smritis.

“I assure thee, mother, that I shall come back after fourteen years.”

Kausalya found that she could not change the strong determination of Sri Rama. She allowed him to go to the forest and blessed him.

Thereupon he went to see Sita. He told her all that had happened and requested her to serve his mother.

Sita said, “A wife shares the fortunes of her husband. I shall accompany you. Thou art my only stay and shelter. I cannot live without you even for a second. I shall walk in front of you and remove the grass and the thorns.”

Sri Rama had to yield to the wish of Sita. Then Lakshmana said to Rama, “If you have decided to go to the forest along with Sita, I shall also accompany you to the forest with bow in my hand. I do not want heaven or lordship of all the worlds without thee, O Rama. I shall walk in front of thee pointing out the path. I shall gather roots and fruits for you and Sita. I shall do everything for thee, when you are awake or asleep.”

Sri Rama allowed Lakshmana to follow him to the forest. Then Rama, Lakshmana and Sita went to Dasaratha. Rama said, “O venerable father, I crave your leave. Permit Lakshmana and Sita also to follow me. They do not wish to be left behind. Leave grief. I shall return after fourteen years.” Rama and Lakshmana then made prostrations to Dasaratha and went round him. They all bowed at the feet of Kausalya.

Lakshmana made prostrations to his mother Sumitra Sumitra said, “O my beloved son, Sri Rama is your refuge. Serve him nicely. Obey his commands implicitly. Consider Rama to be Dasaratha, the daughter of Janaka to be myself and the forest to be Ayodhya Go forth in happiness.”

Sri Rama then spoke to his subjects: “Show to Bharata the love and regard which you have for me, in a greater degree. This will please me. Bharata is virtuous He will do what is pleasing and beneficial to you all.”

Sumantra drove the car. Rama, Lakshmana and Sita reached the banks of the Ganga with the Ashram of Sringivera close by.

Then Guha, the king of the Nishadas, heard of the arrival of Sri Rama. He was immensely pleased. He speedily came there to meet Rama, his friend and Lord. He brought fruits, honey and flowers and with devotion placed them before Rama and prostrated himself at the lotus-feet. Sri Rama embraced Guha.

Guha said, “O my Lord, blessed am I today. My birth in this life has become fruitful. I am at Thy service.”

Sri Rama said to Sumantra, “Return to the city by chariot. Kaikeyi will have the assurance that I have gone to the forest. She will not doubt that my father has told an untruth.” Sending away Sumantra, Sri Rama, with Lakshmana and Sita, took his seat in the boat and soon crossed the Ganga. Guha and his people rowed them across the Ganga. Rama slept on a bed of leaves and Kusa grass with Sita. Then Lakshmana and Guha with bows and arrows in hand protected Rama and guarded him from the attack of wild beasts.

Sri Rama embraced Guha, his devotee, and said, “Having lived in the Dandaka forest for fourteen years l shall come back.”

He sent Guha away and went to the Ashram of Bharadvaja. Bharadvaja Rishi duly honoured Rama and said, “I have this day reached the goal of my asceticism by meeting thee. I think Chitrakuta which is full of honey, roots and fruits is a pleasant abode for thee to live in.” Thereupon Sri Rama proceeded with Sita and reached the beautiful Chitrakuta mountain where Valmiki had his hermitage. Sri Rama bowed to the Muni. The Muni worshipped Rama with Arghya and the rest.

At the command of Sri Rama, Lakshmana built two cottages and spent the days quite happily.

Sumantra, the chief minister, came back to Ayodhya, saluted the king and reported the words of Rama, as told by him. “O charioteer, salute my father. Tell my mother to watch the fire and salute the feet of the king as those of God. Enquire of the welfare of Bharata and tell him to look after the mothers in accordance with justice.”

King Dasaratha shed tears profusely when he heard the words of Sumantra as spoken by Rama and gave up his life-breath uttering, “O Rama, O son, O Sita, O Lakshmana, through separation from thee I am meeting my death.”

The ministers placed the body of Dasaratha in a vessel of oil. Sri Vasishtha sent messengers to Bharata who was living with his brother Satrughna in his uncle’s (Yodhajit) palace at Rajagriha. The messengers informed Bharata: “Do thou come to Ayodhya at once. A great task has to be done by thee.”

Bharata ascended the chariot with his brother and reached Ayodhya. Bharata did not see his father in the palace. He went to see his mother. Kaikeyi said to her son, “I have obtained the kingdom for you by my boons from the king and I have banished Rama in exile. Rama has gone to the Dandaka forest with Sita and Lakshmana. He will live there for fourteen years. Take up the reins of the government and rule the kingdom happily. Dasaratha, your father reached his life’s end on account of grief caused by his separation from Rama.”

Bharata became drowned in sorrow when he heard that his father was dead and his brothers had been banished. He rebuked his mother severely. Vasishtha then consoled Bharata and said, “Perform in proper time the great funeral rites of the king.” Bharata duly performed the rites and the Sraaddha on the twelfth day.

The ministers assembled together on the fourteenth day and said, “O illustrious Bharata of great fame, become now our king.” Bharata said, “Sri Rama, our eldest brother should become the king. I shall live in the forest for fourteen years.” He said to Sumantra, “Get ready my chariot and bring the army quickly.” He started in search of Rama with his mothers, ministers and others. He reached Chitrakuta hill and made prostrations to Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and requested Sri Rama to come to Ayodhya and ascend the throne.

Sri Rama totally declined to come back to Ayodhya and take up the reins of government. Rama replied, “Fire may abandon its heat, ice its coolness, jasmine its fragrance, but I shall never break the promise made to my father.”

Then Bharata took the sandals of Sri Rama and said, “O venerable brother, for fourteen years, wearing matted hair and garments of bark and living on roots and fruits only I will await your arrival, residing in the outskirts of the city. I will entrust the rulership to thy sandals. If on the day the fourteenth year is completed, I do not see thee, I will certainly enter the fire.”

Sri Rama embraced Bharata and said, “I shall do accordingly. I shall certainly return after the end of fourteen years. I give you a definite promise. Protect your mother Kaikeyi.”

Thereupon Bharata, placing the sandals on his head, came back to Ayodhya. He anointed the sandals, left his mother in Ayodhya and lived in Nandigrama awaiting the return of Sri Rama. He administered the kingdom under the control of the sandals.

Thereupon Sri Rama left Chitrakuta and went to the Ashram of Atri. Sri Rama made prostrations to Atri Rishi The Rishi also welcomed Rama with due respect. Sita met Atri’s wife Anasuya who was well versed in Dharma. Anasuya made a present of clothes, flower-garlands and unguents to Sita.

Then Atri pointed out to Sri Rama, “This is the path of the great sages who bring fruits from the forest. O Rama, you will be able to enter the deep forest by this path.”

ARANYA KANDA

Destruction of Viradha

When Rama entered the Dandaka forest he saw the hermitages of ascetics. The ascetics paid due respects to Sri Rama and offered fruits, flowers, roots and water.

Sri Rama found a terrible Rakshasa named Viradha in the forest. The Rakshasa rushed at Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Rama cut off his arms and feet with his arrows. The Rakshasa fell to the ground and said, “I am about to die. I could not recognise that you were Rama, son of Dasaratha. I am son of Yava. My mother is Shataprada. My name is Viradha. I did penance and pleased Brahma. I am powerful. I got this terrible form of a Rakshasa through a curse. I am in reality the Gandharva Tumbura. I once offended Kubera by my absence on account of my attachment for Rambha. He then pronounced a curse on me. I made entreaties. He blessed me saying, ‘You will get your former state of a Yaksha when Sri Rama defeats you in battle.’ My Lord, I have been absolved from that curse through Thy grace. One and a half Yojanas from this place there lives a pious hermit named Sarabhanga. He will do you good. Do thou go to him soon.”

Then from the body of Viradha emerged a beautiful being. He prostrated before Sri Rama and went back to his original abode

Sita said, “My venerable Lord, you should not kill the Rakshasas dwelling in Dandaka without provocation. I feel anxious on account of you. I do not wish that you should go to the Dandaka forest. If you visit that place you will surely fight with the Rakshasas. You are truthful. You have control over the senses. You are firm in your vows. You are obedient to your father. But you kill a creature without any offence. It is not right to kill any creature unless it does some serious harm. The bearing of arms and retirement to the forest, engagement in war and practice of austerity are opposed to each other. You should lead a life of a hermit here. You can resume the duties of a Kshatriya after you return to Ayodhya. My Lord, you know everything.”

Sri Rama said, “The ascetics of Dandaka forest are in great distress. They have requested me to protect them. I cannot abandon the promise as long as I live. I would rather give up my life, even you and Lakshmana than abandon the promise made by me, especially to Brahmins. I should protect the hermits even if they do not request me. It is my duty.”

Meeting of Sarabhanga and Sutikshna

After the destruction of Viradha, Sri Rama and Lakshmana proceeded towards the hermitage of Sarabhanga. The sage worshipped them with due honour and gave fruits, roots and the rest. He said to Sri Rama, “I have for a long time been living here devoted to asceticism. I have been longing to see thee, O Rama. Today my penance has borne fruit. Whatever merit I have acquired that I dedicate to thee. I shall thereby attain salvation.” He made prostrations to Sri Rama and said, “I shall now repair to Brahmaloka.” He entered the fire.

All the Munis who lived in the Dandaka forest came to see Rama. They paid due respects to the Lord. Rama saw, lying on the ground, numerous heads and bones and asked the Munis, “Whose bones are these? Why are they lying here?” The Munis replied, “These are the heads of the Rishis who have been eaten by the Rakshasas when they were deeply immersed in Samadhi. The Rakshasas are waiting for an opportunity to attack the Rishis. They are roaming about here. Therefore, O Rama, thou should remove the troubles of the Rishis.”

On hearing these words of the Munis, Sri Rama made a vow to kill all the Rakshasas.

Thereupon Sri Rama went to the well-known Ashram of Sutikshna, the disciple of Agastya. Sutikshna was always devoted to the worship of Rama. He came out and worshipped Rama according to rites. Sri Rama blessed Sutikshna and then proceeded to the Ashram of sage Agastya.

The sage Agastya paid due honour to Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and said, “I have been living here waiting for thy coming. Today all my sacrifices have become successful. My penance has borne fruit today.” Then sage Agastya gave him the bow which in days of yore had been placed under his care by Indra. He also gave him inexhaustible arrows in quivers together with a sword studded with diamonds and said, “Do thou, O Rama, kill with these the host of Rakshasas who have become the burden of the earth and fulfil the purpose for which thou hast taken a human form under the influence of Maya. Two Yojanas from this place, there is a beautiful spot known as Panchavati on the banks of the river Godavari, which abounds in fruits, roots, water and the rest. There, O Rama, thou shouldst pass the rest of the days.”

Thereupon Sri Rama made prostrations to the Rishi and went by the route pointed out by him.

In the Panchavati

Sri Rama met on the way a big vulture. He took it for a Rakshasa and wanted to kill it with his arrow. The king of the vultures said, "O Rama, I do not deserve to be killed by thee. I am thy father's dear friend Jatayu, the son of Syeni. I live in Panchavati. I am desirous of doing good to thee. I shall certainly do thee good. When some time or other thou art gone hunting along with Lakshmana I shall protect Sita."

Sri Rama said to Jatayu with affection, "O king of vultures, live in this forest and do what is good for me."

Then Sri Rama went to Panchavati and commanded Lakshmana to construct a hermitage. Lakshmana immediately carried out the behests of Sri Rama.

A Rakshasa woman came to the spot where Sri Rama lived. She said to Rama, "Why have you come with your wife to this place which is inhabited by Rakshasas? I am Surpanakha and am a demoness. I can assume any form at will. I am the sister of Ravana. Here I live in the forest with my brother Khara. The king Ravana has given this place to me. I live here eating the Munis. Become my husband."

Sri Rama said to Lakshmana, "Disfigure this ugly, unchaste, haughty demoness." Lakshmana drew out the sword and cut off her ears and nose.

Thereupon she uttered a terrible roar and went to her brother Khara with her body drenched with blood. Khara asked, "O sister, who has disfigured you thus? I shall this very moment kill him." Surpanakha replied, "Rama, together with Sita and Lakshmana, is living on the banks of the Godavari. His brother has, by his command, done this. Brother, kill those two men."

Khara said, "I shall drink their blood and eat those two men." He speedily proceeded with Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas of great strength. They all attacked Rama with various kinds of weapons. All the Rakshasas were killed within one and half Muhurtas.

Thereupon Surpanakha went to Lanka, entered the assembly hall of Ravana and fell down crying at his feet. Ravana said to his sister, "Rise up, who has disfigured you? I shall burn him up in a moment."

Surpanakha said, "You have no spies. You are surrounded by vulgar ministers. You are addicted to vulgar pleasures. You do not know the massacre of your own people at Janasthana. Khara, Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas have been killed by Rama in an instant. He has made the whole of Janasthana devoid of fear for the Munis."

Ravana asked, "Who is this Rama? Why and how has he killed the Rakshasas. Tell me everything in detail. I shall destroy him immediately."

Surpanakha said, "One day I went to the banks of the Godavari from Janasthana. I saw Rama in Panchavati with bow and arrows in hand and wearing matted locks and barks of trees. His younger brother Lakshmana is like him. His wife Sita is extremely handsome. Neither amongst the gods, nor the Gandharvas, nor the Nagas, nor men, have I seen or heard of one like her. I attempted to bring her in order to make her your wife; but Lakshmana cut off my nose and ears at the command of Rama. Then I went to Khara crying in distress. He prepared to fight against Rama with Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas. Those Rakshasas were killed in a moment by Rama. If Sita becomes your wife, your

life will be fruitful on this earth. Take her away forcibly and make her your wife. You are not capable of standing before Rama. Try to obtain her by beguiling him."

Then Ravana went to Maricha and spoke these words, "O my beloved Maricha, Khara, Dushana and fourteen thousand Rakshasas have been killed by Rama in Janasthana even though they did not do him any wrong. My sister Surpanakha has been disfigured by Lakshmana. Therefore I shall, during his absence in the forest, take away his wife dearer to him than life itself with your assistance. Help me in this."

Hearing these words of Ravana, Maricha who was highly wise replied to the king of Rakshasas, "The action which you are going to do will destroy thee to the very root. Persons who always speak that which is pleasing are quite common. But those who speak that which is not pleasing but beneficial are indeed very, very rare and those who will hear it are also rare too.

"I know the powers of Sri Rama. He came to protect the sacrifice of Visvamitra when he was only a boy, sixteen years old. He hurled me to a distance of a hundred Yojanas into the ocean by one shot of an arrow. Since then I have taken refuge in this place which is free from the fear of Rama. I am aware of his valour and strength. He is of noble character. He is the king of the whole world. Those names Raja, Ratna, Ratha, and those that begin with 'Ra' produce fear in me, because they carry the initial letter of Rama's name. I dream of Rama only in my sleep. Give up all hostile intentions against Rama and go home. To attempt to take away another's wife is the greatest sin. You have already thousands of wives. Be true to your own wives. Save your family. Serve Rama with intense devotion. Leave of enmity towards Rama. My advice is for your good only. Accept it. Rama is no human being. He is Lord Hari Himself. I heard all this from Narada. He has come into this world for lightening the burden of the earth through His own Maya."

Ravana said, "You should speak with great respect to a king. But you are uttering harsh words with disrespect owing to your wickedness. I have determined to take away Sita by force. No one can change my firm resolve. I do not want you to tell me about Dharma and Adharma. Sri Rama is the Supreme Lord and has come upon this earth at the solicitation of Brahma with human form in order to kill me. He will surely do this. I shall surely find out means for taking Sita from Rama. I shall attain to the supreme abode if I am killed by Rama.

"Become a wonderful golden deer. Move about in front of Sita. She will say to Rama, 'Bring the deer speedily.' When Rama is at a distance from Sita, cry out in a voice similar to that of Rama, 'Ah Sita, Ah Lakshmana.' O Maricha, if you do not do this, I shall kill you this very moment."

Hearing the words of Ravana, Maricha reflected within himself, "If Rama kills me, I shall be released from this ocean of worldly life. I shall attain the supreme abode by death from his hands. If this vile wretch kills me I shall surely go to hell." Having thus resolved to die at the hands of Rama, Maricha said to Ravana, "O Lord, I shall carry out thy command."

The Illusive Deer

Maricha then assumed the form of a deer of the colour of pure gold with silver spots. His horns were studded with jewels and his feet with costly gems. His eyes were of blue stones and his lustre was like that of lightning. He wandered about near the door of Rama's hermitage and allured Sita.

Sita saw the beautiful deer. She said to Rama, “Do thou get it for me. It will be my plaything. When we return to our kingdom it will be an ornament to our palace. Bharata and my mother-in-law will like it immensely.”

Lakshmana said, “O Lord, there cannot be on earth deer like this which are filled with jewels. This is verily an illusion. That Rakshasa Maricha is playing a foul trick to allure Sita. There is no doubt in this.”

Sri Rama said, “O Lakshmana, do thou carefully protect Sita who is dearer to me than life itself. There are many terrible Rakshasas in this forest. If he is Maricha I shall kill him. If it is a deer I shall bring it in order to please Sita.” Sri Rama took his bow and arrow and went after the illusive deer.

Maricha drew away Rama a long distance from his cottage by becoming visible and invisible. Rama, realising that he was a Rakshasa pierced him with an arrow. Then Maricha appeared in his usual form and fell on the ground bleeding from the mouth. He cried out in a voice similar to that of Rama, “I am dying, O Sita, O Lakshmana,” and gave up his life-breath.

Sri Rama thought: “This vile Rakshasa imitated my voice uttering, I am dying, O Sita, O Lakshmana.’ Sita will be much agitated at heart. She will think that I am dead. Therefore I must return to my hermitage quickly.” Sri Rama was returning to his hermitage.

Sita, on hearing the cry of Maricha got terrified. She said to Lakshmana, “Go at once, O Lakshmana. Thy brother is troubled by the Rakshasa. Dost thou not hear his cry of ‘O Lakshmana?” Lakshmana said, “O mother, this could not be the cry of Rama. It was the cry of the Rakshasa as he was dying. Rama can destroy in a moment the three worlds. How can he who is adored by the gods cry piteously?” Lakshmana remembered his brother’s command. Therefore he did not go.

Sita got angry and said, “Wretch, dost thou wish evil to thy brother? Do you, for the sake of me, wish that Rama should die? Do you wish to carry me off on his departure? Thou shalt not have me. I shall give up my life this moment. How could I desire any other person after having obtained Rama for my husband? Rama does not know thee to be like this, intent upon abducting his wife. I shall not touch any one else except Rama.”

Sri Lakshmana was touched by the harsh speech or wordy shafts of Sita. He said to her, “I cannot bear such harsh words which are like molten lead in my ears. You are indeed a goddess to me. Improper speech is common in women. This is their very nature. Women are fickle, cruel and unrighteous. They always create dissensions and splits.” So saying, Lakshmana slowly went towards Rama.

Abduction of Sita

Finding the splendid opportunity, Ravana, in the guise of a mendicant went to Sita with his staff and bowl. Sita bowed to him and gave him fruits, roots and the like. The mendicant said, “O lady, who are you? Who is your husband? Why do you live in this forest, which is inhabited by Rakshasas? Tell me all this. I shall tell you my story.”

Sita said, “I am the wife of Rama, son of King Dasaratha. I am called Sita, the daughter of Janaka. With his father’s permission Rama has come to live in this forest for fourteen years. I wish to know thee. Do thou tell me about thyself.”

The mendicant replied, “I am Ravana, the grandson of Pulastya, the Lord of the Rakshasas. I am the step-brother of Vaisravana (Kubera). I have come here to carry you to my city. I am a worthy husband for you. Leave off this sorrowful life in the jungle. Give up your love for an ordinary man. What will you do with Rama who is living like a Muni?”

Sita said, “If you talk to me like this, you will be killed by Rama of great valour and prowess.” Then, tearing the earth with his nails and lifting Sita together with the portion of earth that supported her, in his arms, Ravana threw her into his car and quickly travelled in the sky. Sita cried out, “O Rama! O Lakshmana!”

Jatayu, the king of the vultures, rose in the sky and fought against Ravana. Ravana took up the Chandrahasa sword given to him by Lord Siva and cut off the wings of the bird. Jatayu fell on the ground almost dead.

Sita saw five monkeys sitting on a hill. She took off half of her upper garment and jewels, and, making a bundle of the jewels threw it on the hill. She thought that the monkeys would inform Rama about it.

Ravana crossed the ocean and reached Lanka. He placed Sita in the Asokavana in the palace surrounded by Rakshasa women.

Rama killed Maricha and returned hastily along the path. Within a short distance Sri Rama met Lakshmana and asked him, “Why have you come here leaving Sita? You have done an unwise act and have disobeyed my order. I am not pleased with you.”

Lakshmana repeated the harsh words of Sita. Rama replied, “You have taken the words of a woman to be true and acted unwisely indeed.”

Sri Rama quickly went towards his hermitage. As he did not find Sita there, he wept in great sorrow. Sri Rama appeared, to those of foolish understanding, to be attached to things of the world, but not to those who knew the truth.

Rama Meets Jatayu

Sri Rama searched for Sita all over the forest but could not find her. Then he saw Jatayu. Seeing him, Rama said, “This creature has devoured Sita. I shall kill this Rakshasa.” Jatayu said, “Do not kill me. I am the friend of your noble father. I am Jatayu. I had a fight with Ravana to protect Sita when he was carrying her in a car in the sky, towards the south. He cut off my two wings.” On hearing these words of Jatayu, Sri Rama was much moved with affection and tenderness. Jatayu gave up his life-breath in the presence of Sri Rama. Sri Rama performed the funeral rites of Jatayu and blessed him. Jatayu attained the supreme abode of Rama.

Release of Kabandha

Thereupon Sri Rama went to another forest and began to search for Sita. He came across a wonderful Rakshasa of a peculiar shape, with a face on the chest. His arms extended for one Yojana. Both Rama and Lakshmana fell into his arms. Rama cut off his right arm and Lakshmana his left arm.

Kabandha said, “Who are you? Are you the gods from the heaven?” Then Rama said, “I am Rama, son of Dasaratha. Lakshmana is my brother. As you had enveloped us we had to cut off your arms. Who are you?”

Kabandha said, “Blessed am I, if thou art Rama. Formerly I was the king of the Gandharvas. I was proud of my youth and beauty. I was roaming about the world with beautiful women. I had obtained, through my penance, the boon of indestructibility from Brahma. Once upon a time I laughed when I saw the sage Ashtavakra. He became angry and pronounced a curse upon me: ‘Do thou become a Rakshasa.’ Then I beseeched him to free me from this curse. He said, In the Treta Yuga, Lord Hari will incarnate as Rama, the son of Dasaratha. Your arms will be cut off by him. Then you will be released of this curse and you will assume your original form.’

“At one time I ran after Indra. He struck me on my head. Then my head fell on my chest and my feet also went into my sides. Even though I was beaten by his thunderbolt I did not die on account of the boon given by Brahma. The gods pitied me and said, ‘His mouth shall be in his chest. His arms will extend for a Yojana.’”

Then Kabandha praised Sri Rama. Rama said, “O Deva Gandharva, I am pleased with your devotion and hymn of praise. Do thou go to heaven now.”

Meeting of Sabari

Kabandha, the king of the Gandharvas, said to Rama, when he was going to heaven, “O Lord, there is the Ashram of Sabari in front of Thee. She is waiting Thy coming. Go to her. She would tell Thee all about Sita.”

Rama and Lakshmana passed through a beautiful forest and approached the Ashram of Sabari.

Sabari was immensely pleased when she saw Rama and Lakshmana. She immediately rose from her seat with folded hands. She bowed to them with eyes full of tears of joy. She welcomed them and made them sit on her seat. She washed their feet with intense devotion and sprinkled that water over her body. She worshipped them according to rules.

She worshipped the feet of Rama with flowers with great devotion. She gave Rama the fruits which she had collected for him.

Sabari said, “O venerable Lord, my Gurus lived in this Ashram. I stayed here and served them. They told me to live here. They said to me, ‘Sri Rama will come here. Practise meditation here till he arrives. On seeing Rama and burning this body, you will go to the supreme abode of bliss.’ O Lord, I am meditating on Thee as directed by my Gurus.”

Rama then said, “O venerable lady, have you conquered all the obstacles that stand in the way of penance? Have you controlled your anger? Do you practise control of the palate? Do you enjoy peace and bliss?”

The aged Sabari said, “O Lord, I have seen Thee today. A sight of Thee was unattainable even by my Gurus. I feel that my penance has attained its consummation. Blessed is my birth. I shall surely attain Thy eternal abode by Thy grace. Be Thou gracious unto me.”

Rama said, “Neither by sacrifices nor by the study of the Vedas and the like can I be seen by those who are devoid of devotion to Me. The fact of being a man or woman or belonging to a particular caste or order is no qualification. In My worship the only qualification is devotion or pure love.

"O good woman, I shall tell thee in brief the requirements of devotion or pure love unto Me. The first requirement is the company of the saints (Satsanga). The second is recitation of My deeds, or Lilas. The third is singing of My attributes. The fourth is the exposition of My sayings; also constant service of one's preceptor without hypocrisy, cunningness or crookedness, knowing him to be My own self. The fifth is the possession of a charitable nature and practice of Yama (self-restraint) and Niyama (religious observances). The sixth is constant worship of Me. The seventh is meditation with recitation of Mantras. Worship of My devotees who are to Me greater than My own Self, regarding all as My own Self, non-attachment to objects and control of the internal and external organs come under the seventh method. The eighth and the ninth are meditation on my Nature. These are the nine kinds of devotion.

"Devotion arises through these means. When one develops devotion one attains realisation of My own Self. He who has realised My own Self attains the final beatitude or Moksha in this very life. It is an established fact that devotion is the means for salvation. He who has got the first of the means, viz., Satsanga or association with the saints attains devotion and gradual emancipation. There is no doubt of this.

"You have got sincere devotion to me. Therefore I have come to you. There is salvation for you on account of my Darshan. There is no doubt of this. If you know, tell me where my beloved Sita is, and who has carried her away."

Sabari replied, "O Lord, Thou knowest everything. Thou art omniscient and yet thou askest this of me following the ways of the world like an ordinary man. I shall tell Thee where Sita is. Ravana has carried her away. She is now in Lanka. In the vicinity there is the beautiful lake of Pampa. Adjoining the lake is the great hill known as Rishyamuka. Sugriva lives there in great fear with his four councillors. He is afraid of Vali. His brother Vali does not dare to come to the Rishyamuka mountain on account of the curse of Matanga Rishi. He will die instantly if he goes there. Vali threw the dead Asura, Dundubhi. Drops of blood from Dundubhi's mouth fell on the hermitage of Matanga. Therefore the Rishi pronounced a curse upon Vali.

"O Lord, do thou go there and make friendship with him. He will do everything for Thee. He is endowed with immeasurable prowess. Now I shall enter the fire in Thy presence."

The aged Sabari entered the fire and rose from the flame with an effulgent body with celestial ornaments, garland and dress and illumined the place by the halo of her glory. She attained, through the grace of Sri Rama, the abode of eternal bliss. Though she was of low birth she obtained the final emancipation through the grace of Lord Rama. What is there that is difficult of attainment when one gets divine grace.

Devotion to Sri Rama confers immortality and bliss. Therefore recite His name. Sing His glory. Serve His feet. Enthrone in your heart Sri Rama of dark hue whose image is reflected in the heart of Lord Siva.

KISHKINDHA KANDA

Meeting of Sugriva

Then Rama together with Lakshmana slowly approached the banks of the Pampa Lake which was full of lotuses and water-lilies. Rama lamented very much over the loss of Sita. He said to himself, "What shall I say to King Janaka when he asks me about the welfare of Sita in the midst of his people? What shall I say to my mother Kausalya if she asks me at Ayodhya, 'Where is my noble daughter-in-law? And how is she?'"

Lakshmana said, "O revered brother, control yourself. Do not give way to grief. Hope is indeed very powerful. There is nothing unattainable in this world for one who is endowed with hope. We shall certainly bring back Sita. My Lord, be hopeful. Abandon grief."

Sri Rama became courageous when he heard the encouraging words of Lakshmana. Sri Rama drank some water. This removed his fatigue. He walked with Lakshmana over the pleasant road on the banks of the lake. When Rama and Lakshmana were going by the side of Rishyamuka hill, with bows and arrows in hand, Sugriva became suspicious.

Sugriva said to Hanuman, "Who are these brave men? Put on the guise of a Brahmacharin and find out who they are. Have they been sent by Vali to kill me? Find out their intentions. Know their minds. If they are of evil hearts, make a sign to me by hand. Ascertain the truth."

Hanuman went to Sri Rama, prostrated himself before him and said, "Why are you here in this region? What is your object in roaming in this forest? I am Hanuman, the minister of Sugriva, the king of the monkeys. I am the son of Vayu, the wind-god. Sugriva is in distress. He is the younger brother of Vali. He has been deceived by his brother Vali. Vali has abducted Sugriva's wife, Ruma and has turned him out of his kingdom."

Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "O Hanuman, O mighty warrior, I am Rama, the son of Dasaratha. This is my brother, Lakshmana. By the command of my father I came and lived in the Dandaka forest together with Sita. There some Rakshasas took away my wife. We have come here in search of her."

Hanuman said, "Sugriva is living now on the Rishyamuka hill, being afraid of Vali. It is proper that thou shouldst make friendship with Sugriva. He will help thee to kill that Rakshasa who has abducted thy Sita. We shall go just now if it so pleases thee."

Sri Rama said, "O mighty and learned Hanuman, I have come here to make friendship with him. I shall undoubtedly do any work for my friend."

Thereupon Hanuman enlarged his form and said to Rama, "Mount on my shoulders. We shall go up the hill." Rama and Lakshmana mounted on the shoulders of Hanuman. Hanuman flew in the sky and reached the top of the hill in an instant.

Hanuman then went up to Sugriva and said, "O king, abandon all fear. Rama and Lakshmana have come. Get up. I have arranged for Rama's friendship with you. Let fire be your witness and make friendship with him." Then Sugriva came with intense joy to see them. Lakshmana related to Sugriva the whole of Rama's story. Sugriva said to Rama, "O Lord, I shall go in search of Sita. I shall also help thee in killing the enemy." He said to Rama, "O Lord, I shall tell thee something that I had seen. Sometime back I was sitting on the top of the hill with my ministers. I saw a handsome woman being carried through the sky by someone. She was crying and uttering, 'Rama, Rama.' She saw us sitting on the top of the hill, removed her ornaments, tied them in a cloth and looking at us, threw them down. Thou shalt see them

just now. Here are those ornaments, my Lord. Kindly know whether they are thine or not." Sugriva showed them to Rama.

Sri Rama removed the cloth and saw the ornaments of Sita. He repeatedly said, "O Sita." He placed them on his heart and wept like an ordinary person.

Rama said, "O Lakshmana, do you recognise her ornaments?" Lakshmana replied, "Brother, I cannot recognise her bracelets and her ear-ornaments, but I can recognise her anklets as I have constantly saluted her feet."

Then Lakshmana consoled his brother and said, "O Rama, the Rakshasa who took away Sita will be soon killed in battle with the help of Sugriva and Janaki will be restored to thee speedily. Rest assured of this, my Lord." Sugriva also said, "O Lord Rama, I promise thee that

I will kill Ravana and give thee Sita." Hanuman then lighted a fire close by. Rama and Sugriva, making the fire their witness, extended their arms and embraced each other. Then Sugriva sat close to the Lord and related his story to him.

Sugriva said, "O friend, hear the story of what Vali has done to me. Vali is my elder brother. I obeyed him like a servant. There was a terrible Asura named Mayavi. He was the son of Dundubhi Danava. Formerly Vali incurred his enmity on account of a woman. One night Mayavi appeared at the gate of Kishkindha and challenged Vali to fight. He made a terrible roar. Vali came out and marched towards the Asura in wrath. I also followed him. Mayavi began to run in fear. We chased him. Then the Asura entered a spacious and impregnable abyss.

"Vali said to me, 'Sugriva, stand cautiously at the mouth of this cave till I return. I will enter inside and kill the Asura.' One year passed. I found warm blood coming out of the hole. I heard the noise of the Asuras but did not hear the voice of Vali. I thought that he had been killed.

"From all these signs I naturally concluded that Vali was dead and I closed the mouth of the abyss. I performed the Tarpan rites and came back to Kishkindha. I kept all this about Vali a secret but afterwards the ministers came to know about it somehow. They made me king forcibly and much against my will.

"I ruled over the kingdom for some time. Vali returned after killing his enemy. When he saw that I was installed on the throne he became very furious. He spoke very harshly to me. I greeted him with due honour when he entered the palace. I placed my crown at his feet and bowed at his feet. But still he was very wrathful. He did not show any cheerful countenance.

"I narrated to my brother all that had happened and asked his pardon. I told him also, You are my adorable king and I am your obedient servant as before. Your kingdom was handed to me as a trust and I protected it as such. The councillors and the subjects forcibly put me on the throne, because the kingdom was without a ruler. A kingdom without a ruler will come to destruction. Therefore I ruled the kingdom to maintain peace and order.'

"Vali abused me. He said in the presence of his ministers and citizens, I entered the cave to kill Mayavi and asked Sugriva to remain at the entrance till I returned. It took me one year to search for him. I killed him and tried to come out of the cave. I repeatedly called, 'Sugriva, Sugriva' but I did not get an answer. I was very much afflicted at heart. Then I began to kick at the door again and again. At last the stone

gave way. Then I came out of the cave slowly. Sugriva forgot all brotherly affection and shut me in the cave.'

"O Rama, Vali saying thus, turned me out with a single piece of cloth. He took my wife also. I roamed over the world on account of fear of Vali. I was very much troubled owing to the loss of my wife Ruma. Now I have taken shelter in this Rishyamuka hill, because Vali cannot come here on account of the curse of Matanga Rishi. My friend, I have now told you everything about the cause of our enmity. I am quite innocent. Show me thy favour and remove the cause of my fear."

Sri Rama said, "I shall soon kill thy enemy, the ravisher of thy wife. You will soon get back your kingdom and wife. Be not troubled at heart. I can well feel that you are drowned in the ocean of sorrow on account of the cruelty of your brother Vali. I will speedily get you out of it."

Death of Vali

Sri Rama asked Sugriva to challenge Vali in battle. Sugriva went forthwith to the outskirts of Kishkindha and roared like a lion. Vali came out. Sugriva struck Vali on the chest. Vali struck Sugriva with his fists. Then Sugriva vomited blood and ran away. He came to Rama and said, "You made promise to help me and kill Vali. Why does Rama now abandon me? You asked me to challenge Vali to fight. I cannot understand your conduct."

Rama then consoled Sugriva and said, "My friend, hear as to why I did not discharge my arrow. Both you and Vali looked just the same by your stature, dress, voice, movement, colour, look and valour. Therefore 1 could not discharge my arrow. Go now and again fight a duel without any fear. I shall now make a distinguishing mark for you."

Rama said to Lakshmana, "Tie a garland of flowers round the neck of Sugriva." Lakshmana acted accordingly.

Thereupon Sugriva made a dreadful roar and called Vali to fight. Vali heard the roar and came to fight with Sugriva. Tara, the wife of Vali, prohibited him and said, "Some powerful supporter has come to help him. Angada told me that Sugriva has made friendship with Rama. Abandon all enmity with Sugriva. Bring him back and make him the heir-apparent and seek the protection of Rama." But Vali did not pay any attention to the words of his wife.

Vali replied, "O beloved Tara, how can a brave person like me remain at home when I hear a challenge from my enemy. I shall kill him and come back quickly. Be not afraid."

There was a terrible fight between Vali and Sugriva. Sri Rama took an arrow and put it in the bow of Indra. He was hidden by a tree. He discharged the arrow against the chest of Vali. Vali fell down on the ground.

Vali said to Rama, "You hid yourself behind a tree and shot an arrow at my chest. What glory didst thou gain by fighting like a thief? You have done a highly reproachable act. You are not aware of the duties of a king. Thou shouldst have fought me in an open battle. What has Sugriva done for thee which I did not? Dost thou, O Rama, not know my strength which is known throughout the world? Having bound Ravana together with all his family I could bring him together with ther and Lanka in half a second. Thou art known in the world as a follower of Dharma. Tell me, what Dharma world thou achieve by killing me like an ordinary hunter? My flesh cannot be eaten. What shall thou gain by killing me?"

Sri Rama replied, “I protect Dharma by killing wicked people. You have forcibly taken your younger brother’s wife. A daughter, a sister, a brother’s wife and a daughter-in-law are all equal. One who goes to anyone of these, deserves death by kings. The eldest brother, the father and the preceptor are to be regarded as parents by one who adheres to the path of Dharma. A younger brother, one’s own son and a disciple are to be considered equal to sons.”

Then Vali could not find any fault in Sri Rama’s action. He replied with folded hands, “What you have said is quite true. Kindly forgive me for whatever I said in ignorance. A sight of thee is difficult to get even by great Yogis. By reciting thy name at the time of death one attains to the supreme abode. Have mercy on young Angada. Let not Sugriva treat my wife and son harshly.”

Vali abandoned the body of a monkey and became the king of the gods that very moment.

Tara wept bitterly on account of the death of her husband. Sri Rama consoled her. Then Sugriva performed the funeral rites of his brother.

Sri Rama said to Sugriva, “Do thou go speedily by my order and install thyself in the kingship of Kishkindha. I shall not enter a town for fourteen years. My brother Lakshmana will come to thy town. Do thou install Angada as heir-apparent. I shall live near the top of the hill with my brother during the rainy season. Make vigorous attempts in the search for Sita.”

Sugriva said, “O Lord Rama, I shall do whatever hast been ordered of me.” He went to Kishkindha with Lakshmana and carried out the commands of Sri Rama Then Rama went with Lakshmana to the top of the Pravarshna hill.

Search for Sita

Sri Rama said to Lakshmana, “I do not know for certain up to this time if Sita is alive or dead. Sugriva is apparently very ungrateful. He has obtained the kingdom. He has no enemy to attack him. He is surrounded by women and is addicted to drink. He has not yet started the search for my beloved. That vile wretch has forgotten me. Go to Kishkindha and frighten Sugriva.”

Lakshmana went to the city and said, “O Sugriva, O vile wretch, thou hast forgotten Sri Rama. The arrow that killed the brave Vali is today waiting to kill thee.”

Sri Hanuman said, “O Lakshmana, the lord of the monkeys has not forgotten the work of Sri Rama. Millions of monkeys have come from all directions. They will go speedily in search of Sita. Sugriva will do all the work of Rama. He is a greater devotee of Rama than thyself.”

Thereupon Hanuman, Lakshmana and Sugriva went to Sri Rama in the company of Nila and Angada and the rest.

Sugriva said, “Innumerable monkeys who are capable of assuming various forms, who are all skilled in battle, who are born of the energy of gods, have all assembled at the Kulachal hills. There are some who possess the strength of an elephant, some that of ten elephants, some the strength of a myriad elephants and there are some of immeasurable strength. Some are like black mountains, some are of the colour of gold, and some have red faces and others have long hair; some are like pure crystal.

“The chief of the bears, Jambavan of great intelligence, who is my chief minister, is the leader of a million bears. This is Hanuman of great prowess. Here are Nala, Nila, Gavaya, Gavaksha and Sushena.

They are all equal to Indra in strength. Each of them is a leader of a crore of monkeys. They all have given up their lives for thy sake, O Lord Rama. They are fighters with boulders and rocks."

Sri Rama embraced Sugriva and said, "Send them in search of Sita."

Sugriva deputed powerful monkeys in all directions.

He specially deputed monkeys of great strength to the southern quarters. They were Angada, Jambavan, Nala, Hanuman, Sushena, Sarabha, Maindava and Dvivida. He said to them, "Do thou carefully search for Sita. Come back to me after one month. If, without seeing Janaki you delay even for a day you will be killed by me."

Then Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "Take my ring as a token of recognition. It bears my name. Give it to Janaki. In this work I can rely upon you. I know about your strength."

Angada and the rest went about here and there in search of Sita. All the monkeys got tired of searching for Sita. Then they all went to the foot of the sacred Vindhya mountain which was on the shore of the southern ocean. Angada said to the monkeys, "We have not yet found Sita. We have carried out the commands of the king. If we go back to Kishkindha, Sugriva will kill us. Sitting here to die is better than suffering death at the hands of Sugriva. The ocean cannot be crossed and it is unfathomable. What shall we do now?" They all sat there and resolved to die.

Monkeys and Sampati on the Sea-shore

A big vulture came out of the cave of the Vindhya mountain. The vulture saw the monkeys and said, "I have got much to eat. I shall eat each one of these gradually day after day." The monkeys heard these words of the vulture and said, "This vulture will doubtless eat us all. We have not yet done any portion of Sugriva's work. We have also not done service to Sugriva nor to ourselves. This vulture will kill us. We will go to the abode of Yama. O, how fortunate was Jatayu, the wise, the follower of Dharma. He attained salvation or the abode of supreme bliss which Yogins cannot attain."

Sampati, the great vulture heard the speech of the monkeys and said, "Who are you? You are repeating the name of my brother Jatayu, which is like nectar to my ears. Be not afraid, O monkeys! Tell me all about Jatayu. I will be immensely delighted."

Angada replied, "Sri Rama, the son of Dasaratha, together with Lakshmana and Sita, his wife, was roaming about in this forest. His wife Sita was carried away by the wicked Ravana. As she was crying, 'Rama', Rama', the Lord of the birds, Jatayu heard her cries. Jatayu had a formidable fight with Ravana and was wounded and died. He was cremated by Rama. Rama then went to Sugriva and made friendship with him with fire as the witness. Rama killed Vali and installed Sugriva as king of Kishkindha.

"Then Sugriva sent us to search for Sita. He told that we should return within a month, otherwise he would kill us. We have been wandering in the forests. Nearly a month has elapsed and we do not yet know the whereabouts of Sita. We are, therefore, sitting here on the sea-shore waiting to die. If thou knowest, O bird, do tell us of the whereabouts of Sita. We will be immensely grateful to you."

Having heard of this sweet speech of Angada, Sampati was highly pleased. He said, "O lord of monkeys, Jatayu was my brother. I now hear news of him after many years. Take me near the water to offer

oblations to my brother. After that I shall serve you through my speech. I shall tell you the way to accomplish your work."

The monkeys carried the bird to the sea-shore. Sampati took bath and offered oblations of water to his brother. He was then brought back to his place.

Sampati said, "There is a town called Lanka on the top of the Trikuta hill. Sita lives in the Asokavana there. She is protected by Rakshasa women. That Lanka is in the midst of the ocean. It is a hundred Yojanas from this place. I do see Lanka as well as Sita. There is no doubt of this. I can see so far as I am a vulture. He who can cross the ocean which extends for a hundred Yojanas shall undoubtedly come back after seeing Sita."

All the monkeys said, "O mighty Sampati, please tell us your story from the beginning." Then Sampati said, "Jatayu and I were brothers. We were very proud of our strength. In order to test it we flew, in our conceit, to reach the orb of the sun. We flew for several thousand Yojanas. Then Jatayu was scorched. I covered him with my wings. My wings were burnt by the rays of the sun. I then fell on the top of the Vindhya mountain. I was unconscious for three days. Then I slowly opened my eyes. I saw an Ashram and proceeded towards it. Chandrama, the lord of the Munis said to me, 'O Sampati, why have thy wings been burnt down?' I told the Muni all that I had done. Then the Muni said, 'In the Treta Yuga, Lord Narayana will incarnate as the son of Dasaratha. He will come to the Dandaka forest together with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana for the destruction of Ravana. Ravana will carry away Sita like a thief. Then, by the command of Sugriva, monkeys will come in search of her to the sea-shore. Tell them the whereabouts of Sita. Then the two new wings will appear in your body.'

"Thus did Chandrama, the lord of the Munis, advise me. See, my wings have sprung forth anew! They are very tender. I am going now. You will surely see Sita. Make efforts for crossing the ocean.

"Even a wicked man crosses this formidable ocean of worldly life by the mere remembrance of the name of Lord Rama. Then, will you not, O monkeys, the dear devotees of Rama be able to cross this small ocean before you? May all good betide You."

Hanuman

All the monkeys consulted amongst themselves as to how they should cross the ocean. Angada said to them, "Which of you will cross the ocean and do the work of the king? Let that brave one get up and come forward at once. He will be the supporter of Sri Rama, Sugriva and all the monkeys."

On hearing the words of Angada all the leaders sat silent. They looked at each other but said nothing.

Angada said, "Let each one talk about his capacity or ability in doing this work. We shall then know who will be able to do the task."

Thereupon each of the leaders declared his power of going across the ocean. One leader said, "I can cross over ten Yojanas." Another said, "I can cross over twenty Yojanas." The third leader declared that he could cross over thirty Yojanas. Then Jambavan said, "I can cross over ninety Yojanas. But now I am not able to cross the ocean on account of old age." Angada declared, "I can go across the ocean. But I do not know if I have the strength to cross it on my return." Jambavan said, "Angada, thou art our king and guide. I cannot ask you to take up the work although you are capable of doing it."

Angada said, “If it is so let us sleep on the bed of grass as before. When none of us can do the work we should prepare to meet death at the hands of Sugriva.”

Jambavan said to Hanuman, “O Hanuman, why are you sitting silently when we have a great task on hand? Show your strength today. You are equal to the wind in strength. You are created for doing the work of Sri Rama. As soon as you were born you said, when you saw the sun rising in the horizon, I shall catch this ripe fruit for my food’ and flew in the sky for five hundred Yojanas. Therefore, who can describe your strength and greatness? Get up now. Do thou do this great work of Sri Rama. Save us. You are a hero of fiery resolve.”

On hearing the words of Jambavan, Hanuman was immensely delighted. He gave a roar like that of a lion. He became like a mountain. He said, “I shall cross the ocean immediately, reduce Lanka to ashes, kill Ravana with all his family and bring Sita. I shall tie Ravana with a rope with my left hand, uproot Lanka together with its hills and throw it in front of Rama.”

Jambavan said, “O Hanuman, may the Lord bless you. Do thou start the work at once.”

Hanuman went up to the top of the Mahendra mountain with the blessings of Jambavan and assumed a wonderful shape. He meditated upon Sri Rama, recited his name and started his aerial journey.

SUNDARA KANDA

Hanuman Crosses the Ocean

Sri Hanuman said, “Meditating on Rama in my heart I shall cross this ocean which extends to over a hundred Yojanas.” So saying, Hanuman leaped over the ocean with the speed of the wind.

The gods wanted to test whether Hanuman had the strength to enter Lanka. They sent the mother of the serpents called Surasa to put obstacles in his way. She stood in front of Hanuman and said, “Thou hast been ordained as my food. I am hungry. Come and enter my mouth quickly.”

Hanuman replied, “O mother, I am going now to see Sita by the command of Sri Rama. I shall see Sita and inform Sri Rama of her welfare. Then I shall enter your mouth. Give me way now.”

Surasa said, “I am very hungry now. Do thou go after entering my mouth. Otherwise I shall eat thee.” Hanuman said, “Open your mouth quickly, I shall enter your mouth and then go. I am in a great hurry.”

Hanuman extended his body to a Yojana and stood before her. Surasa made her mouth five Yojanas. Then Hanuman extended his body to ten Yojanas. Surasa made her mouth twenty Yojanas wide. When Hanuman extended his body to thirty Yojanas, Surasa made her mouth fifty Yojanas wide. Hanuman assumed the size of a thumb, entered her mouth and came out after some time. Surasa said, “Go and do the work of Sri Rama.”

The mountain Mainaka came out of the waters at the command of the ocean and said to Hanuman, “I am, O great monkey, the mountain Mainaka. I am directed by the ocean to give thee rest. Come out and sit on me and enjoy the delicious fruits.”

Hanuman said, “I cannot eat anything and take rest now. I am going for the work of Sri Rama. I must go forth quickly.” He touched the top of the hill with his hand and marched speedily onward.

He proceeded a short distance. Then a Rakshasa named Simhika, who used to catch shadows, caught the shadow of Hanuman. Hanuman looked downwards. He fell into the waters and killed her with his feet.

After crossing the ocean Hanuman saw Lanka situated on the peak of the Trikuta mountain which was full of fruit trees of various kinds. The town was surrounded by ramparts and ditches on all sides.

Hanuman in Lanka

He assumed a small shape and entered the gate of Lanka at night. A Rakshasa woman stopped him and said, "I am the guardian of Lanka. Who art thou that enterest the town in the form of a monkey like a thief. What dost thou wish to do?" So saying, she struck him with her foot. Hanuman forcibly struck her with his fist.

She fell down immediately, vomiting blood. She got up and said to Hanuman, "Enter, thou hast conquered Lanka. Formerly Brahma told me that Narayana will incarnate as Rama in the twenty-eighth Treta Yuga. Rama will go to the forest with his wife Sita. Then Ravana will carry Sita away. After that Rama will have Sugriva for his friend and Sugriva will send monkeys to find out Sita. Then one of the monkeys will come to me at night. I will attack him and he will strike me with his fist. Then will come the end of Ravana.

"There is a beautiful pleasure garden inside the palace of Ravana. There is a Shimshipa tree in its middle. There sits Sita. She is guarded by terrible Rakshasa women. Meet her. Have a talk with her and then inform Sri Rama of the glad news of meeting Sita. I have remembrance of Sri Rama today. Blessed I am. That remembrance destroys the round of birth and death. It is very difficult to get the company of devotees. Let Sri Rama be gracious unto me. Let him enthrone himself in my heart."

Hanuman assumed a small body and wandered here and there. He entered the palace of Ravana and searched in all places. He did not see Sita. He spoke these words, "Sampati told me that Sita was in Ravana's palace but I do not see her." Then he recollected what Lankini, the guardian of Lanka had told him. He quickly went to the beautiful Asokavana. It had tanks made of gems. It was surrounded by palaces of gold. He saw a Shimshipa tree. At its foot Hanuman saw Sita. She was emaciated and wore dirty clothes. She slept on the earth. She was uttering 'Rama', 'Rama'.

Hanuman reflected within himself, "I have achieved my object. I have seen Sita. I have done the work of Sri Rama." Hanuman was hiding himself amongst the branches of the tree.

Ravana entered the garden and said to Sita, "O fair lady, I love you. Become my queen. Leave this folly. Look at my prosperity, fortune and fame. What will you do with Rama, who is clad in barks? I sent many people to search for him. They could not find him. What shalt thou do with Rama who has no desire for thee even though thou always cherishest him? Though thou givest him all the pleasures of the senses and though thou doest all actions for him and though he enjoys them, Rama does not know that he is the enjoyer. He is therefore an ungrateful wretch destitute of all qualities. He has no love for thee. You are sunk in distress. Even now he has not come. Without the sense of mineness, he is a fool. He thinks himself to be a wise man. I am very much attached to you. Become my wife. Rama is a wanderer in the forest. I doubt whether he lives. If thou acceptest me, thou shalt become the ruler of the women, of the gods, the Gandharvas, Yakshas and Kinnaras."

Hearing these indecent words of Ravana, Sita placed a piece of straw between herself and Ravana and said to him, “Afraid of Raghava you took the guise of a mendicant during the absence of Rama and Lakshmana and carried me away stealthily. You will reap the fruit of it quickly. Sri Rama will soon dry up the ocean with his arrows or bridge it and will come to kill thee in battle. Having killed thee together with thy sons and army he will take me back to Ayodhya. I am devoted to my husband. He is my eternal Lord. Look to Dharma. Follow the rules of Dharma. Lead a righteous life. The wives of others must be protected like your own. You have a perverted mind. You are unrighteous. Restrain yourself and take me back to Sri Rama. Then alone will good attend you and you will be saved. Otherwise you will surely meet your death.”

Hearing this harsh speech of Sita, Ravana became angry. He lifted up his sword and rushed to kill Sita. Then Mandodari interrupted and prevented him from doing a dastardly act.

Ravana said to Sita, “If within two months you submit yourself to me, you will enjoy all kingly pleasures with me. If you do not agree to share my bed within two months, you will be made one of the dishes for my morning meal.” Having said so, Ravana returned to his palace.

The Rakshasa women then came to Sita and terrified her with threats. One woman said, “I shall cut to pieces the body of Sita.” Another opened wide her terrible mouth and threatened Sita. One of them said, “Thy youth has been wasted. Become the wife of Ravana. It shall become fruitful.”

Another Rakshasa woman, Trijata, the daughter of Vibhishana said, “O vile Rakshasa women, do not frighten Sita who is weeping. Bow to her. I had a dream. I saw Rama together with Lakshmana. Having burnt the whole of Lanka and killing Ravana in battle Rama took Sita with him. I saw Ravana wearing a necklace of the skulls of his own sons and grandsons. Vibhishana went to Sri Rama and served his feet with reverence.

“Rama will kill Ravana and his family and give the kingdom to Vibhishana. He will take Sita in his arms and go to his own city. There is no doubt of this.” Hearing these words of Trijata the Rakshasa women were frightened. They went to sleep.

Sita wept loudly for a long time. She caught hold of the branch of a tree and determined to die. She thought within herself, “The Rakshasa women will eat me up. I shall leave this body by hanging myself. What is the use of my living here in the midst of these Rakshasas? My hair is long enough to serve as a hanging rope.”

Hanuman’s Visit to Sita

Hanuman heard the conversation that went on between Ravana and Sita. He wanted to console Sita who made a resolution to hang herself. He slowly spoke as follows in order to make her hear it: “There was the great King Dasaratha, the Lord of Ayodhya. He had four sons. They were Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrughna. Sri Rama went to the Dandaka forest with his brother Lakshmana and wife Sita by the command of his father. He lived on the banks of the Godavari in the Panchavati. There Sita was carried away by Ravana during the absence of Rama. Then Rama went about searching for Sita. On the way he met Jatayu the king of the birds, lying on the ground. He despatched him to heaven and came to Rishyamuka hill.

“Rama made friendship with Sugriva. He killed Vali, brother of Sugriva, and installed Sugriva in the kingdom. Then Sugriva collected the monkeys and sent them in all directions to search for Sita. I am one of those monkeys and a minister of Sugriva. On the instructions of Sampati I speedily crossed the ocean which extends to a hundred Yojanas. I came to the city of Lanka in search of Sita. I reached the Asokavana while searching for her. I have found her under the Shimshipa tree sunk in grief and sorrow. I have achieved my object.”

Sita heard all this in due order. She was struck with great astonishment. She reflected within herself, “Is this a dream or an illusion of my own mind, or is it true? I have no sleep on account of grief; how can it be an illusion?”

She said, “Whoever has said this, which is like nectar unto my ears, let that great soul and the speaker of such dear words show himself to me.”

Hanuman heard these words of Sita. He slowly descended from the tree and stood before her. He prostrated himself and stood before Sita with folded hands.

Sita got frightened and thought that Ravana had come to allure her by illusion in the guise of a monkey. Then Hanuman said to Sita, “O venerable mother, I am not what thou suspect me to be. Leave off thy suspicion. I am the slave of Rama, the supreme Lord. I am the minister of Sugriva, the lord of the monkeys. I am the son of Vayu, the wind-god.”

Sita said, “How can there be companionship between monkeys and men when thou sayest that thou art the slave of Rama?”

Hanuman replied, “Sri Rama came to the Rishyamuka hill at the suggestion of Sabari. Sugriva saw Rama and Lakshmana when he was sitting on the Rishyamuka hill. Sugriva sent me to Rama to know his mind. I went to Rama. I came to know of the purity of the intention of Sri Rama. I placed both of them on my shoulders, took them to Sugriva and made them friends.

“Sugriva’s wife had been kept by Vali, his elder brother. Sri Rama killed Vali and installed Sugriva in the kingdom. Sugriva sent powerful monkeys to all the quarters of the earth to search for you. Sri Rama told me, This work of mine wholly depends upon thee. Do inform Sita of my welfare and that of Lakshmana. Do thou give to Sita this beautiful ring of mine which bears the letters of my name, for the purpose of recognition.’

“So saying, he gave me this ring from his finger. I have brought it carefully. Do thou see this ring, my venerable mother.” Hanuman gave the ring to Sita and bowed unto her and stood at a distance with folded hands.

Sita became overjoyed when she saw the ring bearing the name of Rama. She placed it on her head and shed tears of joy.

Sita said, “Do thou tell Rama of my condition. Let him have pity on me. My life is only of two months duration. If Rama does not come, Ravana will eat me up.”

Hanuman said, “Rama, together with Lakshmana and Sugriva and his army will soon come. He will kill Ravana and take thee to Ayodhya. There is no doubt of this. O venerable mother, give me some token by which Sri Rama may have faith in me.”

Sita said, “Do thou tell Sri Rama and Lakshmana that I am extremely anxious to know of their welfare.” She then took off her head, the ornament, the effulgent Chudamani and gave it to Hanuman saying, “With this Rama shall have faith in thee.”

Sita said, “O Hanuman, tell him something more for the purpose of recognition. In Chitrakuta, Sri Rama placed his head in my lap and slept. The son of Indra assumed the form of a crow, came there and pricked my breast with his beak and made it bleed for the purpose of eating the flesh. Then Rama woke up and saw the wound in my breast. He saw a crow in front of me with his mouth full of blood. He took a piece of straw and applied to it the Brahmastra and threw it at the crow. The crow ran about all the worlds. Even Indra and Brahma could not protect it. Then he came back and fell at the feet of Rama. Sri Rama said, “This weapon is unfailing. Give up one of your eyes and go away from here.’ The crow gave his left eye and went away. O Hanuman, remind Sri Rama of this event for the purpose of recognition.”

Sri Hanuman took the jewel with great joy and made prostrations to Sita. Sita then said to him, “How will you fight the Rakshasas? All the monkeys are of small bodies like yourself.” Thereupon Hanuman showed her his former shape like the Meru and the Mandara mountains. Sita was struck with wonder and said, “Thou art capable of attaining success.”

Sri Hanuman thought within himself: “I came here to do the work of my Lord. I shall do something more. I should see Ravana and talk to him.” He then uprooted the trees of the Asokavana and destroyed them. He killed many Rakshasa women also. They informed Ravana of all that Hanuman had done. Ravana sent an army of Rakshasas to attack Hanuman. Hanuman took up the club and pounded the Rakshasas in the twinkling of an eye. Ravana became very furious. He sent five of his generals and seven sons of his ministers. Hanuman killed all of them. Then Ravana sent his son Akshaya Kumar. Hanuman struck his head with his club.

Then Indrajit himself went to attack Hanuman. He pierced Hanuman with his arrows. Hanuman broke them down and roared like a lion. He took a pillar and killed the charioteer and horses and broke his car to pieces. Then Indrajit bound Hanuman with his Brahmastra and brought him in the presence of Ravana. Hanuman allowed himself to be bound because he wanted to respect the Brahmastra.

The Brahmastra disappeared on account of the boon given to Hanuman by Brahma. Ravana said, “Do thou, O Prahasta, ask this monkey as to why he has come here, what is his mission and whence he has come. Why did he destroy Asokavana and why did he kill my Rakshasas?”

Prahasta asked Hanuman, “O monkey, by whom hast thou been sent? Do not have any fear. I shall have thee released. Do thou speak the whole truth in the presence of the king.”

Then Hanuman spoke: “O Ravana, hear well as to what I am saying. I am the messenger of Sri Rama who abides in the hearts of all, who is the Lord of all, whose wife thou hast abducted for thy own destruction, like a dog carrying off sacrificial oblation. Sri Rama came to the Matanga hill and made friendship with Sugriva in the presence of fire. He killed Vali with one arrow and installed Sugriva as king.

“That lord of the monkeys who is endowed with great strength and prowess is greatly enraged with thee. He is now at the Varsha hill with a crore of powerful monkeys. He has Rama and Lakshmana as his companions. Sugriva went about in search of Sita in all the four directions, under the command of Sri Rama. I am the son of the wind-god. I have also come in search of Sita. I have seen her here. I have

destroyed the forest as I am a monkey. I killed the Rakshasas to save my body. Meghanada bound me with the Brahmastra and has brought me here.

"The Brahma weapon only touched me. It has disappeared on account of the boon given to me by Brahma. I have come here with a heart full of mercy to tell thee what is good for you.

"Lead a virtuous divine life that leads to the final emancipation. Thou art a Brahmin born in a noble family. Thou art the grandson of Pulastya and the brother of Kubera. Thou art not a Rakshasa. Thou art not this physical body. Thou art above all modifications. Misery arises out of the gross body. Misery springs from ignorance and is false like objects seen in a dream. Thou art in essence the Atma that is changeless. Just as the Akasa which pervades all is not tainted by what it is brought into contact with, so also the Atma, though it abides in your body is not affected by anything. The idea that the body is the Atma is the root cause of all bondage.

"The body is not the Self. It is a modification of earth. The life-breath is a modification of the wind. The mind is not the Self. It is a modification of Prakriti or the primordial matter.

"The Atman is an embodiment of bliss and knowledge. It is beyond all modifications. It is distinct from the conglomeration of the body and the rest. It is the Lord of all. 'I am intelligence itself. I am bliss itself. I am birthless and decayless.' Realising this one attains the final emancipation. This Atman is free from taints and faults. It is above all adjuncts. Knowing the Self to be such one is liberated from birth and death.

"I shall tell thee the means of attaining the final release from the round of birth and death. Devotion to Vishnu is a great purifier of the heart. From devotion arises knowledge. From knowledge comes realisation of the Self. Knowing this well one goes to the supreme abode and is merged in the supreme Self.

"Do thou, therefore, worship today Lord Vishnu who is Lord Rama, the consort of Sita, who is Lakshmi. Abandon all foolishness and enmity. Do thou serve Rama. Take Sita with thee and go with thy family and bow unto Lord Rama. Thereby thou shalt be freed from all fears.

"Without developing devotion to Rama who is the Self of all, who resides in the heart, who is all bliss, who is secondless, how can man cross the ocean of worldly life which has sorrow, pain and misery for its waves.

"If you do not listen to me, then you will be burnt in the fire of ignorance. You will fall in the pit of ignorance through your own evil actions. You will not have even a shadow of emancipation. You will not be able to protect yourself on account of enmity towards Rama."

Ravana heard the speech of Hanuman and was very much enraged with him. He said, "Why art thou talking such nonsense in my presence as if thou hadst no fear. Thou art the vilest of monkeys. I shall kill Rama who is the vilest amongst men, together with Sugriva. I shall kill thee this very moment and kill Sita also."

Hanuman replied, "O wicked Ravana, even a crore of beings like thee are not equal to me." Ravana became very angry. He said to the Rakshasas, "Cut this monkey to pieces." Then Vibhishana interrupted and said, "O king, a messenger sent by another king should not be killed by thee. If the monkey is killed, who shall convey the message to Rama for whom thou art waiting to come and be killed. Do thou

therefore think of something equal to killing him. Let the monkey go with that mark, by seeing which, Rama may come to thee soon together with Sugriva and his army of monkeys."

Hanuman Burns Lanka

Ravana said, "The tail of monkeys is very dear to them. Let his tail be covered with cloths and set fire to.

Let him be taken round the town and then sent away. Let all the leaders of the monkeys witness this."

The Rakshasas tied cloths to the tail of Hanuman and soaked them in oil. They set fire to the cloths. They bound him tight with cords and dragged him round the town saying, by blast of trumpets: "This monkey is a thief,"

Hanuman became small in size and released himself from his bonds. He then assumed the size of a mountain, took up a pillar and killed the Rakshasas. He jumped from house to house and burnt the whole of Lanka. The whole town was reduced to ashes with the exception of the house of Vibhishana.

Then Hanuman jumped into the sea and cooled himself. The fire did not burn the tail of Hanuman. By the remembrance of Rama's name even the three kinds of the fire of Samsara, viz., Adhyatmic, Adhibhautic and Adhidaivic are extinguished. How then can the special messenger of Sri Rama be burnt by ordinary fire?

Thereupon Hanuman went to see Sita. He informed her of everything and made prostrations to her and said, "I shall go to Rama. He will come soon with his brother to sex thee."

Sita said, "I have forgotten all about my grief on seeing thee. Now thou art going. How shall I live without knowing the welfare of Rama?

Hanuman said, "Do thou mount on my shoulders. I shall in a moment take thee to Rama."

Sita replied, "Sri Rama should come here, kill Ravana in battle and then take me away. Then it will speak of his eternal glory."

Then Hanuman went to the foot of the hill in order to cross the ocean. He made a leap over the ocean and made a roar when he was nearing his destination. The other monkeys became greatly delighted. They roared loudly. They all said, "Hanuman has come after accomplishing his task." Hanuman descended from the top of the hill and said, "I have seen Sita and destroyed Lanka and the groves. I spoke to Ravana also." All the monkeys embraced Hanuman with great joy and said, "We shall go to Rama and Sugriva this very moment." They all marched speedily to see Rama and Sugriva. On the way they entered the Madhuvan of Sugriva, beat the guards, ate the fruits and drank the honey.

Hanuman's Visit to Rama

Then Hanuman, Angada and others appeared in the presence of Rama and Sugriva. Hanuman prostrated before Rama and said, "Sita has been seen. She is well. She has enquired of thy welfare and that of Lakshmana. She is living in the Asokavana under a Shimshipa tree. She has become emaciated. She is surrounded by Rakshasa women. She is wearing dirty clothes. She is not taking any food. She is always uttering 'O Rama, O Rama.' I hid myself under the branches of a tree and related thy story, thy birth, thy going to the Dandaka forest, and the abduction of Sita by Ravana in thy absence, the way in which thy friendship with Sugriva took place, how Vali was killed and the despatch of monkeys by Sugriva in order

to search for Janaki. I said, 'Powerful monkeys have gone in all directions. Of these I am one of them and have come here.' She became highly delighted. She said, 'Who has made me hear such sweet words which are like nectar to my ears? Let him come forward and stand in front of me.' Then I appeared in front of her and made my prostrations.

"She asked me who I was. I then told her everything in detail. Then I gave her the ring which you had given me . Thereupon she placed full confidence in me and said, O Hanuman, do tell Sri Rama how the Rakshasa women treat me.' I told her, 'O venerable mother, Sri Rama is ever thinking of thee. He is grieving for thee day and night. As soon as he hears that you are in Asokavana he will at once come to Lanka with Sugriva, Lakshmana and the army of monkeys. He will kill Ravana and will take thee to Ayodhya. Do give me some token whereby the Lord may believe me.'

"She gave me her head ornament, Chudamani, which she had tied to her hair, and told me the crow incident at the Chitrakuta hill. She also told me that she would not live beyond two months and Ravana would eat her up if Sri Rama did not come to rescue her within that period." Hanuman handed over the Chudamani to Sri Rama.

Sri Rama said, "This jewel does verily shine on the head of my beloved. When I look at it I think Sita herself has returned."

Hanuman continued, "O Lord, with her eyes full of tears she said, 'Do thou tell Sri Rama of my welfare. Do thou tell Lakshmana to forgive me for the harsh words I spoke to him through ignorance. Do thou do that by which Rama may relieve me of my distress. She wept bitterly in great distress. I comforted her and said, 'I shall tell Sri Rama everything. O venerable mother, Sri Rama and Lakshmana will come to your presence quickly. They will destroy Ravana, his sons and the whole army of Rakshasas. You will soon see Sri Rama return to Ayodhya along with you.'

"I then destroyed the Asokavana and killed many Rakshasas and Akshaya Kumar, the son of Ravana. I burnt the whole of Lanka."

Sri Rama was immensely pleased when he heard the words of Hanuman. He said, "O mighty hero, thou hast done what even the gods could not do. I see nothing to give you as reward for the service thou hast done me.

"I now give thee, O Hanuman, all that I have." Sri Rama embraced him and shed tears of love. Sri Rama said, "Thou art very dear to me. Embrace by me is difficult of attainment in this world."

People attain the supreme abode of Hari by worshipping His lotus-feet with Tulasi leaves, etc. Then what to speak of Hanuman who was embraced by Sri Rama on account of his accumulation of virtuous deeds in the past!

YUDDHA KANDA

Sri Rama said to Sugriva, "This is the most auspicious hour. Make arrangements for the march of our army." Sugriva, the commander-in-chief of the army, directed the monkeys. The whole army was stationed on the shore of the ocean.

When Ravana came to know of the achievements of Hanuman in Lanka, which even the gods could not accomplish, he was filled with shame. Calling his ministers he said, “Rama is coming towards the city of Lanka. He will surely cross the ocean easily. A single monkey has done great mischief. He has burnt the whole city. Sita has also been discovered by him. I wish to consult with you all.”

The powerful Rakshasas said, “We will kill Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Hanuman this very day.” Vibhishana interrupted and said, “Beloved brother, neither Kumbhakarna nor Indrajit can withstand Rama in battle. Rama has not done any wrong to you. You have carried away his wife stealthily. Sri Rama always treads the path of righteousness. It is a heinous sin to think of another man’s wife. This will spoil your good name. It will destroy your life also. Please restore Sita back to Sri Rama at once. Rama is very powerful. You cannot escape even if you are protected by all the gods or Lord Siva Himself.”

The wicked Ravana did not accept the wise and beneficial counsel of Vibhishana. He said, “I am not afraid of Rama. I am not going to return Sita. Even if he appears in battle with gods on his side, he will not be able to fight with me. You are an enemy in the guise of a friend. I am your benefactor. You are not doing what is good for me. Your company is not congenial for me. You are a vile and ungrateful person. One’s own relations always wish for one’s destruction. One may live with a poisonous cobra but one should never live with one who talks like a friend but behaves like an enemy at the time of danger. If any other Rakshasa had uttered even one word like this, I would have killed him this very moment. Fie on thee, O thou lowest of the family of the Rakshasas. You can join Rama and serve him.”

Vibhishana immediately went out of the assembly and said to Ravana, “I spoke words that are beneficial to you. You have insulted me. Yet you are my elder brother and a father unto me. But you do not tread the path of righteousness. Do not rush to your own destruction. Rama will kill you and your. Sons. I am going to Sri Rama.”

Vibhishana’s Surrender

Vibhishana renounced his family and all connections and went to Sri Rama with a desire to serve him with devotion.

Vibhishana said to Rama, “O Rama, I am Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana. I have been abandoned by my brother. Therefore, I have sought thy shelter. I asked him again and again to send Sita to thee. But he does not listen to me, as he is impelled by destiny.”

Sugriva said to Rama, “This vile and deceitful Rakshasa should not be trusted by thee. He is the powerful brother of Ravana. He will kill us on finding our weak points. Do thou command me. I shall have him killed by the monkeys.”

Hanuman said, “Vibhishana has heard of your prowess and found wickedness in Ravana. He has come here with the intention of obtaining the kingdom.” Sri Rama said, “I will never forsake one who has come to me as a friend even if he has an evil intention. He has sought my shelter. Even if Ravana were to come and take shelter under me I shall give him protection. Even if an enemy seeks refuge of another he should be protected by one who wants to do his duty even at the risk of his life. Whoever once seeks my shelter saying ‘I am thine’, unto him I shall give protection from all creatures. This is my vow.”

Rama embraced Vibhishana and said to Lakshmana, “Bring water from the ocean. I shall install him as king of Lanka.” Sri Rama installed Vibhishana as the king of Lanka with the water brought by Lakshmana.

Sri Rama said, “Till the sun and moon continue to shine, till the earth retains her place, till my story is current in the world, let him rule Lanka.”

The ocean-god did not show himself to Rama. Rama wanted to dry up the ocean. He took his bow and arrow. The sea became agitated and receded a Yojana from its shore. The ocean-god came up and said, “Let Nala build a bridge over my waters.” Then Nala, with the aid of the monkeys, built a bridge which was a hundred Yojanas in extent. The monkeys quickly crossed the ocean by that bridge.

Sri Rama said to Angada, the son of Vali, “Go to Ravana and give him my message: ‘O mean Rakshasa, I am now waiting at the door of Lanka. I am your chastiser. Show me your strength by which you carried away Sita stealthily. I will destroy the Rakshasas to the very root by my arrows if you do not seek my shelter after restoring Sita. Vibhishana, who is virtuous will become the king of Lanka. If you once come within my sight you can never return alive.’”

Angada repeated to Ravana the message of Sri Rama. Ravana became very angry and ordered his Rakshasas to prepare for battle.

The monkey leaders, Hanuman, Angada, Kumuda, Nila, Nala, Sarabha, Mainda, Dvivida, Jambavan, Dahivakra, Kesari and Tara with their millions of troops besieged the town on all sides. Rama took up his bow and sent an arrow of the shape of a half-moon which cut off Ravana’s thousands of umbrellas, as well as the crown in a moment.

Atikaya, Prahasta, Mahanada, Mahodara, Devasatrut, Nikumbha, the son of Kumbhakarna, Devantaka and Narantaka fought bravely against the monkey leaders and attacked them with javelins, daggers, spears, arrows and other diverse weapons.

Some Rakshasas were killed by Rama. Others were killed by Hanuman, Sugriva, Angada and Lakshmana. Although Rama was the Lord of all yet he took up a human form for mocking the world and did the sport of battle and other actions.

Ravana asked Vidyujjihva, a sorcerer, to create by magic the head and bow of Rama. Thereupon Vidyujjihva at once produced a magic head and bow. Ravana was highly pleased at the sight and proceeded to Asokavana with the head to meet Sita.

Ravana said, “O silly lady, what will you gain by thinking of Rama? He is dead. Abandon your attachment for him. Be thou mistress in the palace.”

Ravana then said, “Vidyujjihva, place Rama’s head in front of Sita. Let her behold with her own eyes the miserable condition of her husband.” Ravana said to Sita, “This is the head of Rama. Heroic Prahastha has slain Rama and has brought his bow and quiver. Be my wife, O Sita.”

Sita saw with her own eyes Rama’s head and his bow. She was overwhelmed with sorrow. She said to Ravana, “Take me immediately to my dead husband and kill me over his corpse.” Ravana left the Asoka forest and then proceeded to the Assembly Hall as he had to consult with his ministers on some urgent work. As soon as he left the place, that magic head and the bow disappeared in a moment.

Death of Kumbhakarna

Then Ravana ordered the Rakshasas to wake up Kumbhakarna from his sleep. They carried out the instructions of Ravana. Kumbhakarna approached Ravana and said, “O beloved brother, what should I do now?”

Ravana said, “As you were in sound sleep you are not aware of the terror that has been caused by Rama. Rama and his party have crossed the ocean. They are now in Lanka. They are causing heavy destruction of our Rakshasas. Many have already been killed in battle by the monkeys. Save this city of Lanka. Destroy these monkeys and the two brothers.”

Kumbhakarna said, “O king, at the time of consultation, what I formerly said has now come to pass, as the fruit of your evil action. Follow the advice given by Vibhishana. That course is highly beneficial to us. You can do what you like.”

Ravana became very angry when he heard the words of Kumbhakarna. He said to him, “Thou were not brought here to impart wisdom, O sage! You instruct me like a venerable Guru who teaches duty. If it so pleases you do my bidding and fight. If not, do thou go and sleep soundly.”

Kumbhakarna said, “Rejoice, O king! I shall bring the head of Rama from the field of battle in a moment.”

Kumbhakarna made a roar and caused great havoc amongst the monkeys. He wielded his Gada and threw down the enemy on all sides.

Sri Rama cut off the right hand of Kumbhakarna with the Vayuastra and the left hand with the Indrastra. He sent the Indrastra which cut off his head. The Rakshasas informed Ravana of the death of his brother.

On hearing of the death of his brave brother by Rama, Ravana became overwhelmed with sorrow. He reflected within himself: “The brave Kumbhakarna has been killed. How can I conquer Rama? I did not hear the beneficial counsel of my younger brother, Vibhishana. I did not act in accordance with his wise instructions. Hence I suffer now. This is all due to my ignorance. I drove out the righteous Vibhishana. Therefore I am in a miserable plight. Rama is verily strong. His weapons are also very powerful. My Rakshasas have been slain by his weapons.”

Death of Meghanada

Ravana ordered his son Meghanada to wage war with Sri Rama and Lakshmana. Meghanada performed seven sacrifices. He performed the difficult sacrifice of Lord Siva and obtained boons from Him. He could go wherever he willed. He could live in the sky and had obtained Tamasa Maya. By this Maya, darkness is produced. No one could know anything. He got an invincible bow, an inexhaustible quiver and terrible weapons for the annihilation of the enemy. He performed the sacrifice in Nikumbhila. He was called Indrajit because he obtained victory over Indra.

Indrajit said to his father, “Venerable father, leave all sorrow. I shall kill thy enemies. I shall go to Nikumbhila, propitiate the fire and obtain cars and weapons. Then no one can conquer me. I will become invincible and unassailable by the enemy.” So saying, he speedily went to the place for the performance of the Homa. He wore red clothes, a red garland, besmeared himself with red unguents and began to perform the Homa in the Nikumbhila altar in silence.

Vibhishana informed Rama of Indrajit performing the Homa and said, “O Lord, if the Homa is completed then Indrajit will become unconquerable by gods and men. Therefore I shall immediately have Indrajit killed by Lakshmana. Indrajit cannot be killed by anyone except one who has for twelve years lived without food and sleep. This has been ordained by Brahma, Lakshmana has not eaten and slept ever since he came out of Ayodhya, in order to serve thee. Do thou send Lakshmana with me. He will certainly kill Indrajit.”

Thereupon Sri Rama ordered Lakshmana to accompany Vibhishana and kill Indrajit. They both proceeded to Nikumbhila. Vibhishana said to Lakshmana, “Behold the Rakshasas. That which appears to you like a dark cloud is the Rakshasa army. Be ready to break through this mighty army with great effort. Then you will be able to see Indrajit. Attack him before the sacrifice is completed.”

Lakshmana rained down arrows upon the Rakshasas who guarded the Homa and Indrajit. Indrajit abandoned the Homa and came out immediately. He mounted on the car with bow in hand and challenged Lakshmana to fight. There ensued a fierce battle between them. Lakshmana then fixed Indrastra to his bow, drew his bow and said, “If Sri Rama, the son of Dasaratha is devoted to Dharma and established in truth and unequalled in valour in the three worlds, then let this arrow kill the son of Ravana.” So saying and drawing the bow, which was infallible, up to the ear, Lakshmana let it go towards Indrajit. That arrow severed the head of Indrajit from his body and threw it on the ground.

Then Lakshmana and Vibhishana went to see Sri Rama and informed him about the death of Indrajit. Sri Rama said, “Well done, Lakshmana. I am immensely pleased. Thou hast done that which was hard to do. All has been won by the death of Meghanada.”

When Ravana heard of the death of Indrajit, he became unconscious and fell on the ground. He regained his consciousness and grieved very much over the loss of his son.

The Homa of Ravana

Ravana went to Sukracharya, the preceptor of the Asuras and said, “O venerable Guru, all the Rakshasas have been killed. I am in great distress. How shall I gain victory in the battle?”

Sri Sukracharya replied, “Give oblations to the fire carefully. If there be no impediment in the Homa, there will arise from the fire a great car for thee. There would arise horses, quivers, bows and arrows, armed with which you will become unconquerable. Take the Mantras from me, and do the Homa quickly.”

Ravana silently began to perform the sacrifice. The smoke of the Homa was shown to Sri Rama by Vibhishana. He said, “O Lord, Ravana has started doing the Homa. If this Homa is completed he will become very difficult to conquer. Do thou send the leaders of the monkeys to throw obstacles in the performance of the Homa.” Sri Rama sent Sugriva, Angada, Hanuman and the other powerful warriors. Sarsa, the wife of Vibhishana, showed by a sign, the place of the sacrifice.

The monkeys entered the cave and beat up the sacrificial priests. Hanuman snatched the sacrificial ladle from Ravana’s hand and struck him. Angada entered the palace of Ravana, bound Mandodari and brought her dragging by the hair. The monkeys broke up the sacrifice and went to the forest.

Ravana consoled his wife and said, “My dear, all this is due to fate. I shall just now go and kill Rama and Lakshmana. Otherwise Rama will kill me with his arrows and I shall go to the supreme abode. Thou shouldst perform my funeral rites and, having killed Sita, do thou enter the fire with me.”

Mandodari said, “My Lord, Sri Rama cannot be conquered by thee in battle. He is the supreme Lord Himself. He has taken a human form for thy sake. Why didst thou forcibly carry away his wife, Sita from the forest? For thy own destruction and for the purpose of having my son Indrajit killed thou didst so. Do thou give back Sita to Rama and install Vibhishana in the kingdom. Let us go to the forest.”

Ravana replied, “How shall I live in the forest? I have lost my sons, brothers and all the hosts of Rakshasas. I shall fight against Rama. Pierced by his arrows, I shall go to the supreme abode of Vishnu. I am quite aware that Rama is Vishnu Himself and Sita, Lakshmi. Having known this I brought Sita away from the forest by force. I shall go to the supreme abode of Vishnu, killed by Rama in battle. Having crossed this ocean of the world with its five waves of Kleshas, with the four Yugas as its eddies, with wives, sons, relations, wealth and friends as its crocodiles, wrath for its fire, affection for its net, I shall attain the feet of Hari.”

Death of Ravana

Ravana sent his Sakti weapon towards Lakshmana. It pierced the heart of Lakshmana. He fell down on the ground. Sri Rama was afflicted at heart. He said, “If my brother is slain, life is of no use to me, nor is Sita. Of what use is victory to me when Lakshmana is dead? One can get wives and relations also in all countries. But I do not know of that place where a real brother like Lakshmana could be got.”

Thereupon Sushena, the physician of the army consoled Sri Rama.

Sushena asked Hanuman to bring the Sanjeevini plant from the Dronagiri Parvata.

Hanuman brought it and squeezed the herb and gave it to Lakshmana to smell. Lakshmana regained consciousness and stood up and said, “O Lord, kill Ravana today according to your promise.”

Thereupon Sri Rama sent terrific arrows on Ravana. Ravana also struck Rama with powerful arrows. The fight was a sight for the gods to see. The battle was fierce and unparalleled. No other battle could be compared to it. Just as the sky and sea have nothing to be compared with, this divine fight between Sri Rama and Ravana stands unparalleled in the history of the world. The gods were witnessing the fight from above.

Rama was standing on the ground. Ravana was riding in a chariot. Therefore Indra sent his car with his charioteer, Matali. Then Rama ascended the chariot.

Ravana discharged a Rakshasa weapon on Rama. The arrows turned into serpents full of poison and dropped on all sides of Rama. The serpents vomitted fire. Sri Rama sent the Garudastra. The arrows became Garudas and cut off those serpent arrows.

Sri Rama discharged Indrastra on Ravana. It cut off the head of Ravana. Many heads of Ravana fell on the ground and again joined themselves to his body. Neither day nor night, twilight nor the quarters were visible. The shape of Ravana could not be seen in the battle.

Then Rama was quite astonished. A hundred and one heads of Ravana were cut off but Ravana did not die.

Vibhishana said to Rama, “O my Lord, this Ravana has got a boon from Brahma. Even though his arms and heads are cut off, they shall soon reappear, There is the water of life in the form of a circle in his navel. Do thou dry it up by the fire weapon; then only will he die.”

Sri Rama took up the Agneyastra and pierced the navel of Ravana with it. It dried up the water of life and cut off his head.

Ravana then appeared with only one main head and two arms. He rained showers of arrows and weapons on Sri Rama. Sri Rama repelled the Gandharvastra of Ravana with another Gandharvastra, and his Daivastra with another Daivastra.

At this moment Agastya Rishi came near and said, “O valiant Rama, recite Aditya Hridaya thrice and worship the sun. You will soon obtain victory in battle. This Mantra destroys all enemies and prolongs life. He who recites this Mantra is freed from danger, disease and fear.”

Sri Rama meditated on the sun and recited the Mantra. Matali also said, “I shall remind thee of the way in which Ravana can be killed. Do thou discharge the Brahma weapon for the destruction of Ravana. His head should not be cut off by thee. O Lord, he is not to be killed through the head but through the chest.”

Thereupon Sri Rama discharged the Brahmastra carefully to pierce his breast. The arrow fell on Ravana’s breast. It immediately tore up the heart of Ravana. That arrow killed Ravana and returned to Rama’s quiver. The fight between Sri Rama and Ravana lasted for twelve days.

Death of Ravana and After

Then there was a shower of flowers on Sri Rama. The Munis, Siddhas and the gods sang his praises.

Then there issued forth a light effulgent like the sun from the body of Ravana and entered the body of Sri Rama in the sight of all the gods and others.

The gods said, “O, how fortunate is Ravana. We are endowed with Sattva. We are objects of the grace of Lord Vishnu and yet we are subject to fear and the like. We are sunk in the world. On the contrary, this cruel Rakshasa, who was the killer of Brahmanas, who was endowed with the quality of Tamas, lover of the wives of other people, enemy of Vishnu and killer of ascetics entered Rama in the sight of all beings.”

Narada appeared on the scene and said to the gods, “Ravana thought of Rama only day and night on account of his enmity with Rama. Knowing that his death was to be brought about by Rama, he saw Rama from fear everywhere. He had Vaira-Bhakti. In his dreams also he always saw Rama. As he was killed by Rama he was freed from all fetters and impurities and so he attained the eternal abode of Vishnu.”

Even a great sinner who is endowed with evil qualities, who is fond of the wealth of other people, if he remembers Sri Rama, he is freed from all kinds of faults that pertain to this worldly life. He attains purity and goes to the supreme abode of Vishnu. May Sri Rama, who is effulgent like a million suns, who is adored by the gods, the Yogis and devotees, protect us.

Sri Rama asked Vibhishana to perform the funeral rites of his brother. Vibhishana did it accordingly. Sri Rama asked Lakshmana to install Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. Lakshmana carried out the orders of Sri Rama.

Hanuman, according to the instructions of Sri Rama informed Sita of the victory of Sri Rama and the death of Ravana. Vibhishana brought Sita in a palanquin before her Lord. Sita prostrated to the lotus-feet of Sri Rama,

Lest anything should be said against the chastity of Sita, she had to pass through a severe ordeal of fire. Then Rama declared her to be without any blemish. Rama, Sita, Hanuman and others returned to Ayodhya in a Vimana.

Sri Vasishtha, aided by the Brahmins installed Sri Rama on the throne. All rejoiced heartily. Rama reigned the kingdom in a just manner. There was peace, prosperity and happiness everywhere.

UTTARA KANDA

Kaala (Time) took the form of a Muni, approached Sri Rama and said, "I have to speak to thee on a very secret subject. Let no one else know of it. Let no one else be told of it. Should anyone else hear it or see us talking, he should meet with death at thy hands."

Sri Rama replied, "O Time, very well." Thereupon he said to Lakshmana, "Beloved brother, stand at the door. Do not allow anyone to enter inside. Should anyone come he will meet with instant death at my hands. There is no doubt about this."

Then Rama said to the Muni, “Now let us hear thy message.” The Muni said, “I have been sent by Brahma, 1 am, O Lord, the first born of thy sons. I was born of thee through association with Maya. I am called Time (Kaala), the destroyer of all. Brahma has sent this message to thee: The time has now come for thee to protect the kingdom of heavens. Ravana has been killed. Thy object has been achieved and the period of thy life amongst men is over.’”

Sri Rama replied, “My wish is also the same. My object has been achieved. I am ready for doing the work of the gods.”

Now the Rishi Durvasa came to the entrance of the palace and said, “O Lakshmana, I have some urgent business with Sri Rama. Please tell Sri Rama of my arrival.”

Lakshmana replied, “Sri Rama is talking now with somebody. Kindly wait for a moment.” Durvasa became very angry and said, “If you do not allow me to see Rama this very moment, I shall burn the whole family and kingdom to ashes.”

Lakshmana thought that his own death was preferable to the destruction of all through Durvasa. Having thus resolved he went to Rama and informed him of the arrival of Sage Durvasa.

Sri Rama at once dismissed Kaala and came outside to receive Durvasa, the son of Atri. He paid due respects to the Rishi and said, “What can I do for thee?”

Durvasa said, “O valiant Rama, today I have completed my fast for a thousand years. I want some food now.”

Sri Rama at once gave him food. The Rishi took the food and went away happily.

Sri Rama remembered what he had said in the presence of Kaala. He was sunk in sorrow. Lakshmana said, “O my beloved brother, abandon all grief on account me. Kill me now. I am ready. Do not break thy sacred vow. Do not deviate from the path of Dharma.”

Sri Rama called his ministers. He informed Sri Vasishtha about the coming of Durvasa, the message of Kaala, and his own vow.

Sri Vasishtha and the ministers said, “We have known through the eye of knowledge about the separation from Lakshmana that had been ordained in days of yore. Do not violate thy vow. Abandon Lakshmana at once. If thou shouldst break thy promise, Dharma will be destroyed. If Dharma is destroyed all the three worlds will be destroyed. Thou art the upholder of all the three worlds. Abandon Lakshmana and protect the world.”

Sri Rama said, “O Lakshmana, go wherever thou will. Let there be no destruction of virtue. Banishment and death of the good are both equal.”

Sri Lakshmana made prostrations to Sri Rama and repaired to the banks of Sarayu. He closed all the nine gates of the body and took his Prana to the head. He then meditated on the immortal, supreme Brahman. All the gods and the Rishis threw flowers over him and praised him.

Indra carried Lakshmana to heaven. All the chief gods and the celestial Rishis worshipped him. He assumed the form of Sesha. Brahma and Yogis of Siddha Loka were in great joy.

The Departure of Rama

Sri Rama said to his ministers and Sri Vasishtha, “I shall install Bharata as king today and follow the path of Lakshmana.” Bharata said, “O my Lord, I do not desire kingdom either in the heavens or on the earth without thee. Surely I shall follow thee. Do thou install Kusa as king of Kosala and Lava of Uttara. Let messengers go speedily to bring Satrughna. Let him hear of our departure to Vaikuntha.”

On hearing these words of Sri Rama and Bharata all the people who assembled fell on the ground and became unconscious. After some time they regained their consciousness. Thereupon Sri Vasishtha said to Sri Rama, “O dear Rama, all the people are full of grief. Show thy grace to them.”

Sri Rama said to them, “What shall I do for you all?” They replied, with folded hands, “We shall go wherever thou goest.” Sri Rama said to the people, “Let it be so.”

Sri Rama sent messengers to bring Kusa and Lava. Kusa and Lava reached Ayodhya in time. Sri Rama installed them as kings of Kosala and Uttara. Sri Rama sent the messengers to bring Satrughna. The messengers informed Satrughna of the advent of Kaala, the visit of Durvasa, the departure of Lakshmana, the vow of Sri Rama and the installation of his sons. Satrughna called his sons and installed Subahu in Mathura and Yupketu in Vidisha. He then went to Ayodhya to see Sri Rama. He bowed at the lotus-feet of Lord Rama and said, “I installed my two sons in the kingdom there. I have resolved to accompany thee wherever thou goest. I am devoted to thee. Thou shouldst not forsake me.” Sri Rama said, “Be ready. You can accompany me.”

Many monkeys, Rakshasas, and bears suddenly appeared before Sri Rama and said, “It is our firm resolve to follow thee wherever thou goest.” Sri Rama said, “Yes, you can all accompany me.”

Sugriva also appeared. He bowed to Sri Rama and said, “I installed Angada in the kingdom. I have resolved to follow thee.”

Sri Rama said to Vibhishana, “My beloved devotee, so long as the earth endures do thou rule the people in the kingdom of the Rakshasas."

Thereupon Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "O son of the wind, O mighty hero, do thou live for many long years."

He said to Jambavan, “Do thou stay on this earth till the end of the Dvapara Yuga.”

Then Sri Rama went out of the town. Bharata, the ministers, leading Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, all the monkeys with Sugriva as their head, and several others followed Sri Rama.

On the left of Sri Rama there was Lakshmi. On the right went the goddess of the earth. Weapons and Astras, bows and arrows walked in front of him in their embodied forms.

All the Vedas took human forms and accompanied him. The blessed Mother of the Vedas, Gayatri together with Pranava OM, followed Hari along with the Vyahritis, Bhu, Bhuva, Svah, Maha, Janah, Tapah and Satyam. All the people of Ayodhya together with their sons, wives and daughters also followed him.

Sri Rama reached the river Sarayu. Brahma came there together with all the gods, Rishis and Siddhas. Fragrant breeze blew; there was a shower of flowers from the sky.

Brahma said, “O Lord Rama, thou art the supreme Lord. Thou art Vishnu, the embodiment of bliss. Entering, together with thy brothers, the body of the One, primeval Lord Hari, do thou rule the gods.”

Sri Rama became the Lord Vishnu of four arms with conch, mace, discus and lotus. Lakshmana assumed the form of Sesha. Bharata and Satrughna became the discus and the conch. Sita had already become Lakshmi.

Then the Siddhas, Munis, Brahma and others worshipped the supreme Lord with hymns. They became extremely happy as they attained the object of their desires.

Then Lord Vishnu said to Brahma, “These devotees have followed Me. Let them attain regions equal to Vaikunta.”

Brahma said, “Let them go to the effulgent regions of the Santanikas. Those mortals who, O Rama, even unconsciously utter thy holy name at the time of the dissolution of their bodies, let them also enjoy those regions which are attainable by Yogis.”

All the monkeys, Rakshasas and others touched the waters of the Sarayu, abandoned their bodies and attained their forms. Sugriva entered the sun.

All the people who followed Sri Rama entered the waters of Sarayu and abandoned their bodies. They all mounted chariots and went to the worlds of the Santanikas.

Section Four

CHARACTERS OF THE RAMAYANA

1. SRI RAMA

Rama was Lord Hari Himself incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravana. He was well accomplished, beautiful and endowed with royal marks. He was the foremost of those who were skilled in the use of bows and arrows. He was born of the Ikshvaku line. He had his sway all over the world.

He had eyes like lotus-petals and a countenance like the full moon. His arms were long and beautiful. He had broad shoulders. His eyes were red. He had a deep voice. He had proportionate limbs. His gait was slow and majestic. It was like that of a lion. He had four lines on his thumb. He had a pointed nose. He had a high forehead.

His glory and powers were unlimited. He was peerless on earth. He was free from malice. He was gentle and the protector of his people. He always addressed the people in gentle words. He never used harsh words even when anybody addressed him rudely.

He was wise and virtuous. He was effulgent like the sun, in forgiveness like the earth, in intelligence like Brihaspati, in frame like Vasava, in prowess like Indra. He observed ascetic vows and honoured saints. He would forget hundreds of evils done to him but would gratefully remember a single act of kindness, ever shown.

In the leisure of his martial exercises, he had discussions on the Sastras with the wise and the aged people. He always followed the right in every walk of his life and never swerved from his royal duties.

If anybody approached him, he would talk to him first. He was exceedingly powerful but never haughty. He was the upholder of the four castes. He conferred honour upon people. He was worshipped by all. He was well versed in polity and greatly devoted to the Brahmins.

He was a friend of the poor and chastiser of the wicked. He was a cosmic benefactor. He was well versed in religion, social customs and laws. He looked after the welfare of his subjects and the people too loved him immensely. He never indulged in profane and irrelevant talks. He had mastery of Yajur Veda, Dhanur Veda, the Vedangas, etc. Whenever people put a question to him he answered them wisely like Brihaspati. He was skilful in the use of arms. He was honoured by the scholars of the Vedas. He was proficient in philosophy and poetry.

He never spoke a lie even in extreme danger or peril. He was brave, candid and modest. He was the source of all good. He always respected his superiors. He was free from idleness. He was ever vigilant. He sought no evil. He had perfect control over anger.

He was ever ready to keep vigilant watch over his own faults. He had aged and pious Brahmins for his guide.

He was an expert rider, a great warrior, a valiant general. He had great skill in all the military manoeuvres. He was unconquered even by the gods. He was free from the evil habit of carping.

Sri Rama is an Avatara of Lord Hari. Lakshmana is an Avatara of Adisesha. Bharata and Satrughna are Avataras of the conch and discus. Sita is an Avatara of Sri Lakshmi.

Sri Rama possessed red eyes and his arms were sinewy. His steps were like those of an elephant. He had long arms, broad shoulders and black, curly hair. He was valiant and glowing with splendour. He was in no way inferior to Indra himself in battle. He was well versed in holy scriptures and equal to Brihaspati in wisdom. He was skilled in every science. He was an object of love and reverence with all people. He had his senses under perfect control. Even his enemies were pleased to see him. He was the terror of the wicked and the protector of the virtuous. He was endowed with keen intelligence. He could never be vanquished by anyone.

He renounced the throne and the pleasures of the senses and the world to fulfil the words of his father.

If Rama had longed for the throne, it was quite easy for him to get it. He was very popular. He was the mightiest of heroes. He destroyed the Rakshasas and bent the tremendous bow of Lord Siva. But he did not show the least physical force. He gladly accepted what was dictated by the cruel and wicked Kaikeyi. The throne possessed less fascination for him than the obedience of his father's behests. He renounced the kingdom and the comforts of a king. He gladly accepted exile. The laudable virtues of Sri Rama cannot be adequately described.

Of all the four brothers Sri Rama was a paragon of virtues. He was not only kind and affectionate but generous and considerate of feelings for all around him. He had a splendid physique and winning manners. He had a magnanimous personality. He was extremely noble, generous, chivalrous and fearless. He was very simple and absolutely free from ostentation.

Sri Rama's life was a life of holy obedience, of stainless purity, of matchless simplicity, laudable contentment, commendable self-sacrifice and remarkable renunciation. He paid equal respect to his mother and his stepmothers and revered his Guru.

Sita once told Rama to seek shelter in a safe place and let the forest dwellers alone as there was much danger there. Rama's reply revealed his firm determination to adhere to truth, and to his duty as a king to protect those who took shelter under him. Sri Rama said, "O Sita, I may even give up life or you or Lakshmana but can never give up the fulfilment of my word given particularly to helpless Brahmins. Rama speaks but once and never fails to keep up his promise." Sri Rama was happy in adversity, calm in miseries, intrepid in dangers.

Sri Rama was a mighty hero. He was the hero of heroes. Single-handed, he killed great and renowned warriors like Khara and Dushana. He vanquished the invincible Vali.

He was an ideal king. He ruled the kingdom in a wonderful way. He was just and righteous. He was courageous and kind. He was endowed with a gentle and generous disposition. He was civil and courteous.

His subjects loved him immensely. Not a single man was unhappy during his regime. He often used to say, "I will do anything and everything to please my subjects, and, if necessary I can even abandon my dear wife for their sake." That is the reason why his reign was called "Ramarajya." There were no dacoits during his regime. All led a virtuous life. Nobody spoke any untruth. Anybody could leave a bag of gold or jewels even in the main street. No one would touch it.

2. SITA DEVI

Raja Janaka, the famous King of Mithila, reputed sage and Raja Rishi, whose conversation with sage Yajnavalkya appears in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad was tilling a plot of land for the purpose of performing a Yajna to get a son. Sita Devi was found in the furrow. She was named Sita, because she was got from Seeta (furrow).

The beautiful child was taken to the palace and was nursed very carefully, Gradually, as the years rolled on she became an accomplished girl of remarkable beauty and virtues.

One day Sita was playing with a small ball. One of her playmates kicked the ball forcibly and it went underneath the great bow of Lord Siva. Nobody could take the ball from underneath the bow. Sita came near the bow and lifted the bow with ease and asked one of her fellow-playmates to go inside and bring the ball. Raja Janaka was noticing this game of Sita and wondered at her extraordinary strength. The bow of Siva was very heavy and even ten persons could not move it from one place to another. So Raja Janaka determined to give Sita in marriage only to him who could lift and bend the great bow of Siva.

Raja Janaka wanted to give Sita in marriage to a worthy prince. But he was not able to get a suitable match. He proposed to wed her to one who would lift, bend and string the great bow of Lord Siva, and proclaimed his intention far and wide. Many princes came to lift the bow.

Visvamitra took Rama and Lakshmana to Mithila and introduced them to Raja Janaka and informed him of their mission. The great bow which many reputed and strong princes had failed even to lift up was then brought before a large assembly, with great difficulty, by a large number of strong and robust men. Sri Rama lifted the bow easily and broke it in his attempt to string the bow. Sita immediately put the garland around the neck of Sri Rama.

Sita was then married to Sri Rama with great pomp and eclat. She took a vow to remain faithful to her husband till the end of her life and to carry out his commands even at the risk of her life.

Sri Rama requested Sita to stay at home on the eve of his departure to the forest. She did not agree. She was quite aware of the duties of a faithful and devoted wife. She was an ideal wife. She was not an ordinary woman. She was a goddess. She was the incarnation of Lakshmi. The purity of her life was beyond description. Sita said, “Scriptures declare that the wife alone should share the fate of her husband. Therefore I should live with thee in the forest. The husband is the mainstay for a woman. He is her all in all. He is her only support or sole refuge. As is the kingdom without a king, the body without life and river without water, so is a woman without her husband, The shade of her husband’s feet is preferable to residence in mansions. There is nothing in the three worlds for a woman to possess when compared to her husband. Wealth, jewellery, costly dress, palatable food, celestial cars are useless without thee, O Lord! I have been taught from my very childhood to follow my husband under all circumstances and conditions of life. I shall certainly carry out what I have been taught. I shall spend my days quite happily with thee under the shade of trees, which is better than a palace. I shall ever think of the service that is to be rendered to thee. I shall have no other thoughts than these. Wherever you are, that is the spacious heaven for me. I cannot bear your separation even for a second.”

Sri Rama said, “O my sweet Sita, you will have to encounter immense difficulties in the forest. There are wild beasts and cannibals. The path is very thorny. You will have to live on roots and leaves. Therefore abandon the idea of following me to the forest.”

Sri Sita replied, “O my venerable Lord, I shall welcome gladly all sorts of difficulties. I shall develop many good qualities through sufferings and miseries. The thorns will be as soft to me as a bed of roses, the shade of a tree more comfortable than a mansion, when I live with thee. Thou art my divinity. I shall certainly follow thee. I shall give up my life without thee, O Lord!”

Sri Rama had to yield to the wishes of Sita. Thereupon Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita bade goodbye to their relations, friends and subjects and repaired to the forest.

Sita heard the cry of Maricha and asked Lakshmana to run towards Rama. Lakshmana said, “O venerable mother, be not troubled. Be not anxious. There is none in this world to do any harm to Lord Rama. He is invincible You will see him in a second.” Sita suspected the pure-hearted Lakshmana and rebuked him: “Your evil object shall never be fulfilled. I would rather kill myself with a weapon or throw myself from the top of a hill or enter into a blazing fire than live with a wretch like you.”

Lakshmana at once ran in search of Rama. Ravana took this golden opportunity and appeared before Sita in the guise of a Sannyasi with shaven head. The noble and pious Sita offered him a seat and welcomed him with fruits and roots. Then the wicked Ravana assumed his own form and said, “O Sita, I am the king of Rakshasas. I am Ravana by name. I am the king of Lanka. Become my wife and you can happily live with me.”

Sita replied, “O wicked Ravana, how dare you speak to me thus? Do not talk such unbecoming words. If you are courageous enough stay here awhile till the arrival of my Lord and you will reap the fruit of your evil intentions.”

Ravana kept Sita in the Asoka garden. She lived on fruits and roots and practised severe austerities. She was ever thinking of her Lord. She was guarded by hideous Rakshasa women. These women tormented Sita in a variety of ways, used very harsh words and threatened to eat her up.

One day the wicked Ravana dressed himself beautifully and went to the Asoka garden. He addressed Sita, “O lady, be merciful to me. I am the son of the Rishi Visravas, of high ascetic merit. Visravas was the son of Pulastya Rishi. Pulastya Rishi was the son of Brahma himself. Such is my lineage. I am famous as the fifth regent of the universe. Be my queen.”

Sita replied, “I am ever devoted to my husband. Your father is a wise Brahmana born of Brahma. Why do you not lead a virtuous life? You are bringing disgrace on your brother Kubera. Are you not ashamed to speak such unbecoming words? Your object will never be fulfilled. I forsake thy kingdom, pomp and glory. Restore me to my Lord and ask his pardon. Otherwise you will be destroyed along with your kinsmen.”

Ravana said, “I allow one year for you to think and give your consent to live with me. If you do not agree to it, I shall kill you after the expiry of that period.”

Sita spent her days in great distress. Ten months had passed.

Hanuman proceeded to Asokavana and found Sita Devi. He presented the ring given to him by Sri Rama. She rejoiced very much when she saw the ring. She enquired everything about her Lord.

Hanuman said, "O venerable mother, I shall carry thee on my back to thy Lord." Sita replied, "I cannot come without the command of my Lord. I can only be rescued if he comes and takes me. Further, I cannot touch the body of another man. Tell my Lord to come here personally and free me from this imprisonment. Take this Chudamani and give it to him."

Sri Rama said to Hanuman, "Go to Sita and convey to her the happy news of the fall of Lanka and death of Ravana." Hanuman carried out the command of his Lord. Sita was immensely delighted. She replied, "Tell my Lord, O Hanuman, that I am anxious to see him at once."

Sri Hanuman went back to Sri Rama and told him what Sita had wished him to say. Thereupon Sri Rama asked Vibhishana to bring Sita to him.

Vibhishana went to the Asokavana and brought Sri Sita to the presence of Sri Rama. Sita prostrated before her Lord.

Sri Rama said, "Beloved Sita, it was my duty to recover thee and to punish the wicked Ravana. Therefore I killed Ravana and brought you back. You had been living in the house of a stranger. How then can a man of high family like myself take you back? How can I accept you as my wife? I have to renounce you. Go wherever you like. You are quite free now."

Sita said, "If I entertained a thought of any other man except thyself even for a moment thy order would not have affected me. I spent my weary days in the Asokavana, ever thinking of thee alone. I led a rigid ascetic life. You have not made any enquiry before passing this sentence. I am not an ordinary woman. I am the daughter of the mighty and pious King Janaka. I am a mistress in the family of the great Raghu. I am the wife of that luminous star of the solar dynasty, Sri Rama. You have forgotten all about this while passing the cruel sentence on me. I am not at all afraid of death even. You have brought against me the charge of unchastity and you have declared this before an assembly of great personages. I cannot die with this ignominy! O Lakshmana, kindly prepare my funeral pyre at once. If 1 am unchaste, if I have thought of anybody else save my Lord, my body will be burnt down to ashes; but if I am pure, if my mind has always thought of my Lord, the fire would not even touch me. I shall go through this ordeal and then gladly obey the royal command."

Hearing these words Lakshmana looked at his brother with a grieved heart. Sri Rama at once ordered him to do as Sita had advised.

The funeral pyre was prepared. Sita entered the fire fearlessly. The god of fire held Sita in his arms and came out of the fire. He said, "O Rama, this is thy Sita. She is quite pure and innocent. Therefore accept her as thy wife. She is attached to thee. She has never, even in her dream, thought of any other person for a moment. Your suspicion is groundless. No one in this world has hitherto dared to undergo such a severe ordeal." So saying, Agni, the god of fire, vanished.

Sri Rama said, "O noble Sita, this was a great ordeal. You have come out successful. Thou hast shown to the world what superhuman deeds a really devoted and chaste wife can perform. Gods have made you an example of an ideal wife." So saying, Sri Rama caught hold of Sita's hand with intense affection and joy. Sita put the dust of her Lord's feet on her head.

Sri Rama installed Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. Thereupon Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Vibhishana, Sugriva and Sita left for Ayodhya in the Pushpaka Vimana (aerial car), as the period of fourteen years of exile had already expired.

Bharata, with his party came in advance to receive his brothers. Sri Rama, his brother and Sita saw Kaikeyi and paid their respects. On an auspicious day Sri Rama ascended the throne with great pomp and eclat and commenced to discharge his sacred duties as a king.

In the course of time Sita became quick with a child. One day Sri Rama asked her, "Tell me what thou wishest now." Sita replied, "My venerable Lord, I wish to visit the holy cottages of the saints in the forest and talk to the ladies." Sri Rama agreed and made preparation to send her away with Lakshmana the next day.

Sri Rama had sent people to all parts of his kingdom to find out the intentions and condition of his subjects. Sri Rama asked Durmukha, "What news have you brought today?" Durmukha replied, "All thy subjects are happy in thy reign, O Lord. All extol thee for thy justice but some blame thee for keeping Sita in the palace. She had been in the house of Ravana for a long time and thou hast accepted her without due enquiry as to her purity. The example which thou hast set will produce an evil effect on the women of thy kingdom as they will give support to their own misconduct." When Sri Rama heard this he was very much afflicted at heart.

He went out for a walk. While he was passing by the side of a tank he saw two washermen, washing clothes and quarrelling with one another. One was the father-in-law and the other was the son-in-law. The father-in-law said, "Your father was rich and respectable. So I gave my daughter to you in marriage. But you are cruel. You beat her severely and so she left you. She is now living with me. She is young and beautiful. She should not remain aloof from you." The son-in-law replied, "Your daughter does not like to live with me. She wants to live with you only. Sita, the wife of Sri Rama was abducted by Ravana. She lived in Lanka for a long time but Sri Rama welcomed her back to his home without any hesitation. He is the king and so nobody would question or blame him. But we are poor people and if we deviate even a bit from the path of right conduct we are at once blamed and censured by our relations and friends and banished from society."

Sri Rama overheard this conversation and became drowned in grief. He reflected within himself: "I know that Sita is chaste, pure and faithful and yet I shall have to part with her in order to carry on the administration of the kingdom with justice."

He returned to the palace and said to Lakshmana, "My subjects blame me for keeping Sita in the palace as they think her to be unchaste. I have pledged my words to rule over them in a just manner and make them happy. Therefore I have made up my mind to banish Sita. Take her to the forest and leave her there."

Lakshmana shed tears and said, "My venerable Lord, Sita passed through the severe ordeal. The god of fire proclaimed her innocence and absolute chastity."

Sri Rama replied, "I am quite aware that Sita is perfectly innocent and chaste but my subjects have not witnessed the ordeal. Therefore they will not believe this. I must fulfil my sacred vow faithfully. I must sacrifice my self-interest."

Lakshmana replied, “The fire ordeal took place in the presence of a big assembly. The news ought to have reached the ears of the people of this place. This world contains scandal-mongers and back-biters. Even the gods cannot please them. I have opened my heart to thee. I am thy humble and obedient servant. I am ever ready to carry out thy commands.”

Sri Rama said, “I have reflected over the matter very deeply. O Lakshmana, take her to the forest and leave her there. Do not tell her that I have banished her till you have reached the other side of the Ganga.”

Lakshmana carried out the behests of Sri Rama. They crossed the Ganga in a boat. When they entered the dense forest Lakshmana wept bitterly. Sita said, “O Lakshmana, what is the cause of your grief?”

Lakshmana replied, “O venerable mother, how can I communicate the heart-rending news to thee? My brother has abandoned thee on account of public opinion as to thy chastity because you remained in the house of Ravana alone for a long time. I have brought thee here for banishment under his orders.”

Sita expressed her feelings thus: “O Lord, thou knowest that Sita is chaste, faithful and ever devoted unto thee. Thou hast abandoned her to avoid a bad name. It is her duty to avoid all censure and infamy to thee, because thou art her sole and excellent shelter. O Lakshmana, tell Sri Rama that a king must acquire virtue by protecting his subjects. This is the highest morality. Sita is born to undergo life-long troubles, difficulties and sorrows. Destiny willed it so. Sita is not at all sorry for herself. She is not at all displeased with him. He must be naturally anxious and perturbed in her absence. Comfort him in all possible ways. Although he has sent her in exile, yet, tell him not to banish her from his heart. She will enthrone him in her heart and worship him day and night. Wherever she resides, he is ever present with her. He is the master, she is the servant. He is the preceptor, she is the disciple. He is God, she is the devotee. He is the Lord, she is the subject. He is the king of Ayodhya, she is an ascetic named Rama Priya.”

What an ideal wife Sita was! Every word that came out of her mouth expresses sublime sentiments and deep reverence unto her husband. These words should be engraved in the tablet of the heart of every woman. No other woman save Sita could have given expression to such soul-stirring and magnanimous thoughts at such a sad and critical stage.

Sita Devi began to weep bitterly. Lakshmana came back to Ayodhya. Some boys of the neighbouring hermitage accidentally came to the spot where Sita Devi was weeping. They at once went to Maharshi Valmiki and said, “A lady is quite alone and is weeping on the banks of the Ganga.”

Maharshi Valmiki at once repaired to the spot and said, “O lady, do not weep. Be cheerful. I shall now take you to my Ashram and give you all comforts. You will have companions too.”

Sita prostrated at the feet of the Maharshi and followed him to his hermitage. She was introduced to the ladies of the Ashram.

As days passed on Sita gave birth to Lava. He was very handsome and captivated the hearts of all who looked at him. One day Sita left Lava to the charge of Valmiki and went to the river Ganga for a bath. When she went half the distance she changed her mind and returned to the Ashram and took the child also with her. At that time Valmiki was sitting in meditation. When he opened his eyes he could not find the child left to his charge. He was much puzzled. He did not know what he would say to Sita when she

came after her bath. So immediately he took a Kusa grass and pronounced some sacred Mantras and created out of it a child equal in all respects to Lava. Sita returned with Lava and was surprised to find a child similar to Lava in the Ashram. Valmiki explained to her what took place in her absence. The new child was named Kusa and Sita took care of him as her own child. Lava and Kusa grew up like twins.

Sri Rama wanted the Maharshi to attend the Asvamedha Yajna. The Maharshi took the twins also. He ordered the boys to chant the Ramayana in the streets, temples, public places and private residences of nobles. The people of Ayodhya were struck with wonder and admiration at their charming recital. The news reached Sri Rama. He wanted to hear their songs. The boys appeared in the council hall and chanted the Ramayana. Sri Rama came to know that the boys were the disciples of Maharshi Valmiki. Maharshi Valmiki related the whole story of the boys. He further added, "Sita is a perfectly pure lady. Thou shouldst take her back. She is quite willing to take an oath about her fidelity or faithfulness unto thee."

Sri Rama agreed to this. One morning Sita appeared before a public assembly and said with humility, "O mother earth, kindly give me a place in thy heart, as I never thought of anybody save Sri Rama. O gracious mother, I have always been worshipping my Lord, Sri Rama by my words, deeds and thoughts. Grant me a resting place in thy bosom."

Mother earth at once gave way. A handsome lady with divine effulgence and splendour came out of the cleft in the earth. She took Sita in her arms with great affection and love and disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. The spectators were struck with awe and wonder.

Sita was the daughter of mother earth. She came out of the earth in Mithila and went back into the earth. Sita possessed, like her mother earth, the sterling qualities of the power of endurance, patience, self-sacrifice and forbearance to a wonderful degree.

She could not be happy even for a day. Her life has been a life of life-long miseries. She suffered countless troubles in Lanka. How heroically she bore all the troubles and sorrows. She did not at all feel the injustice of her husband's conduct when she was cruelly banished to the dense forest even when she was in the family way, although her chastity was proved by the severe fire ordeal.

Sita Devi was the most virtuous, chaste and pious lady the world has ever produced. Her life career was a brilliant one though it was full of adversities and sufferings. Sita was cheerful amidst sufferings and troubles. She was put to severe tests. She was tried in the furnace and proved to be perfectly pure. No one save Sita has stood such close scrutiny and the severest of tests. She had been declared chaste by the general consent of mankind also.

She was put to ignominy and shame. She was deprived of her personal comforts. She was ill-treated in the Asokavana by the Rakshasa women. Ravana threatened to take her life. She entered the fire. She was banished to the dense forests. She bore all these sufferings through the power of her chastity. Chastity can do and undo things. Chastity is a mighty power on this earth. Its potency is beyond description.

Ages have passed away and yet the chaste life of Sita Devi continues to exercise a wholesome influence on the lives and character of Indian ladies. Her ideal life of purity continues to produce interest, admiration and reverence in our minds and the readers of the Ramayana.

May the women of India and the world at large profit by following the ideal and chaste life led by Sita! May they make their lives sublime and happy! May they shine like Sital May the blessings of Sita be upon you all! May we all sing Sita's glory now!

"Jaya Sita, Jaya Sita Sita, Jaya Sita Jaya Sri Sita. Jaya Rama, Jaya Rama Rama, Jaya Rama Jaya Sri Rama."

Om Tat Sat

3. LAKSHMANA

Lakshmana, the son of Dasaratha by his second queen Sumitra, was the youngest brother of Sri Rama. He was an Avatara of Adi Sesha. He was a constant companion of Rama both in pleasure and pain. They lived, dined, played and slept together. One could not bear the separation of the other. Lakshmana was a loving servant also of Sri Rama. He carried out Sri Rama's commands to the very letter. He lived in perfect obedience to Sri Rama.

Lakshmana had pure and unstinted brotherly love for Sri Rama. His object in life was service of his elder brother. Obedience to the commands of his brother was the motto of his life. He would not do anything without getting Rama's permission. He regarded Sri Rama as his God, Guru, father and mother. He followed Rama as the shadow follows the object. He was quite unselfish at heart. He abandoned all

The comforts of royal life willingly only for the company of his brother. He served Rama's cause in all possible ways. He made Rama's cause his own. He sacrificed every personal consideration on the altar of his brother's love. Sri Rama was his all in all. He could relinquish anything, his life even for the sake of Rama. He abandoned in a moment, his mother, his wife and his royal comforts to follow Sri Rama and Sita in exile. What a magnanimous soul! What a great Tyagi he was! Here is an unprecedented example of the most disinterested and devoted soul in the history of the world. He lived only to serve his brother. That is the reason why the readers of the Ramayana eulogise Lakshmana for his pure and unique love for his brother. Some eulogise Bharata, while others speak very highly of Hanuman, but Lakshmana was in no way inferior to Bharata or Hanuman.

Lakshmana followed Sri Rama for the long period of fourteen years though he was perfectly aware of the dangers of forest life. He accompanied Rama with his bow and arrow though his help was not required by Visvamitra. It was all due to his devotion and love towards his brother Rama.

Sri Rama also had intense love for Lakshmana. When Lakshmana fell down unconscious in the battle against Ravana, Sri Rama's heart was broken. He wept bitterly. He made a determination not to revisit Ayodhya when he lost his brother. He said, "A wife like Sita can be had, but a real, devoted brother of the type of Lakshmana cannot be had again. The world is nothing for me without my brother."

Lakshmana was pure in thought, word and deed. He led the life of an ideal Brahmachari during the fourteen years of exile. He never looked at the face or body of Sita. His eyes were ever directed towards her lotus-feet only. He could not recognise the jewel and ornaments of Sita. He fought and killed the great hero, Meghanada through his power of Brahmacharya. Meghanada, the son of Ravana, wielded great power, strength and skill in warfare. He had received a boon from the gods that he would be killed only by one who maintained celibacy for twelve years without a break.

Lakshmana became very furious against those who acted against the name and glory of Rama. At Chitrakuta he made up his mind to kill Bharata when the news of Bharata's coming with his army was made known. He thought that Bharata was coming to destroy Rama in order to rule the kingdom without fear. Rama said, "My beloved brother, Bharata is a pure and noble soul. He has intense devotion to you and me. Abandon this misapprehension." Then only was Lakshmana pacified.

He became very indignant when he came to know that Sri Rama's rights to ascend the throne were taken away by Kaikeyi on behalf of her son. He would have destroyed Kaikeyi and Bharata if Sri Rama had not pacified him. Sri Rama made Lakshmana clearly understand that the matter was purely providential, that everything was controlled by the Lord and that destiny was inexorable.

During the exile Lakshmana worked day and night for Rama and Sita. He acted the part of a vigilant watchman when they were asleep. He brought fruits and roots from the forest. He attended to their wants very carefully and attentively. He built a hut for them and made a wooden bridge over rivers. He was their most willing and obedient servant. There was nothing that he considered too great for the sake of Sri Rama.

Lakshmana said to Kausalya, "Mother, if Rama enters fire, I shall enter first. If he enters the forest, I shall also follow him. I cannot leave the company of Sri Rama even for a second." What great affection he bore for Sri Rama. This is unrivalled in the history of the world. The world has not witnessed a brother like Lakshmana and it will not see in the future also.

Kaikeyi did not wish that Lakshmana should be sent to exile. Dasaratha did not order that Lakshmana should accompany his elder brother and yet Lakshmana of his own accord abandoned the pleasures of the palace and followed his brother to the forest leaving all affection for his mother and wife. It was all due to the love and reverence he had for his brother Sri Rama. He had no base motive in accompanying his elder brother. His life was a life of perfect dispassion and absolute renunciation.

Lakshmana was bold and fearless. His valour, prowess and strength were beyond description. He marched to the Dandaka forest along with Sri Rama to kill the Rakshasas. He said to Sri Rama, "My venerable brother, I shall ward off all dangers which would beset you in the forest. I shall lead and clear the way with the bow and arrow in my hands.

"I shall remove all dangers on the way. I shall be thy soldier and servant. I shall do everything for you. I shall bring roots and fruits for you. You will have to take rest. I shall watch when you and Sita are sleeping. Thou art my all in all. I want thee alone. I do not yearn for heaven or worldly prosperity. Thou art my treasure and spiritual wealth. Thou art my very life and soul."

He encouraged his brother Rama in all possible ways and consoled him after Sita was taken away by Ravana. He assured him that he would recover her after destroying Ravana. He never lost his courage and presence of mind. He had superhuman capacity for work and indefatigable energy. He wandered throughout the day in search of Sita. He never cared for his personal wants. His loyalty to Sri Rama was extremely laudable.

He was indeed very far-sighted. Rama was highly benefited by Lakshmana's wise counsel. Once Sri Rama paid no heed to the advice of Lakshmana and he had to reap the bitter results. Lakshmana distinctly told Sri Rama not to chase the golden deer as it was a false one. Sri Rama ignored his words. What followed we all know.

Lakshmana stuck tenaciously to his principles and ideals. He had a thorough understanding of any situation. He would do the right thing at the right time. He had the sense of self-respect, and self-confidence in himself.

Lakshmana tried his level best to remove the grief of his brother and make him happy. He was endowed with great power of self-reliance.

He exhibited remarkable valour, chivalry and heroism in the war. He destroyed countless Rakshasas. He never cared for his life.

He carried out the behests of his revered brother despite taunts. He prepared the hot burning vessel for Sita's ordeal. Further, he undertook to leave Sita in the forest when she was in the family way, when Sri Rama wanted to banish Sita on account of public censure.

Showers of calumnies were poured over his head. Censures were levelled against him, but he did not mind them. He bore them patiently and thought that they were the outcome of a sacred cause. He was innocent. He lived only to carry out the commands of his brother. He was not heartless and unsympathetic but he was a superman. These charges cannot bring any infamy on him. They cannot in any way bring him down and mar his greatness. The acts done by him, on the contrary, bespeak of his glory. They augment reverence in the eyes of the readers of the Ramayana and posterity.

The life of Lakshmana is highly inspiring and extremely soul-stirring. He has left an indelible impression on the human mind. Derive the best possible lessons from his life, put them into practice in your daily life and be happy.

Develop love for all your brothers. Develop universal brotherhood. Love all as your brothers. This is the great lesson you should derive from the life of Lakshmana. Try to tread in the footsteps of Lakshmana.

Mark the devotion of Lakshmana unto Lord Rama. On the contrary, what do we see in these days? Brothers fight against themselves over trifling matters and go to the courts for division of property. They will quarrel over nothing at all and do not talk to each other. We see much intrigue and discord among them. Is this not a disgraceful and lamentable state of affairs? O man, think of the majestic personality of Lakshmana and his devotion and love for his brother. Place him as an ideal before you. Imbibe his sterling qualities. Study his life and deeds again and again. Your vile nature will be gradually changed. Learn to love your brother unselfishly. Make your wavering love firm. You will enjoy peace and happiness at home.

O noble Lakshmana, who regarded brotherly affection above everything else in this world, O indomitable hero, thy sense of duty and pure love towards Rama has immortalised thy name. We cannot think of Sri Rama without thinking of you. You were the apple of his eye. You were his right hand. You were only another form of Sri Rama, like Bharata. As long as this world exists, so long will your name also exist. You will live as long as Sri Rama does. You have earned undying reputation through your untiring service and devotion to thy brother. Show us the way to serve and love Rama like you did. Deign to reveal to us the secrets of service unto Rama. Salutations unto thee, O Lakshmana! May we walk in thy footsteps! Give us a helping hand in crossing this ocean of Samsara by bestowing upon us the true love and devotion unto Rama which you possessed.

We shall ever sing thy glory and repeat: “Rama Lakshmana Janaki, Jaya Bolo Hanuman Ki.” Introduce us to our beloved Lord Rama, thy dear brother and master. Help us also in holding communion with Lord Rama. O Lakshmana, be ever merciful unto those neophyte Sadhakas who grope in the darkness of ignorance. Teach us the secret of success in becoming staunch celibates till the end of our lives. Once again salutations to thee, O Lakshmana, the darling of Sumitra and the apple of Sri Rama’s eyes!

4.BHARATA

Bharata, the son of Dasaratha by his youngest queen Kaikeyi was a great Bhakta of Sri Rama. He was born under the sign of Pisces (Meena) and influence of Pushya, the eighth Lunar mansion in the Hindu Zodiac.

He was very well trained in the art of archery, horsemanship, etc. He had the knowledge of the Vedas. He loved Satrughna immensely. Both dined together and put on the same kind of dress. They were inseparable like body and shadow.

Bharata was much attached to Sri Rama. You could not find in the history of the world one equal to Bharata in brotherly love. His dispassion was remarkable. He spurned sovereignty. Bharata’s brotherly love towards Sri Rama is unique in this world and will ever remain noteworthy.

Bharata’s Resolve

When Vasishtha said to Bharata, “My child, we shall today install thee as king by thy father’s command,” he replied, “O venerable sage, what shall I do with the kingdom? I am a great sinner. I am not a fit person. My brothers and sister-in-law Janaki are undergoing untold miseries for my sake. I am much afflicted at heart on this score. Rama is our Lord and king. We are verily his servants. We shall go tomorrow morning to bring back Sri Rama immediately. Just as Rama repaired into the forest clad in barks, so shall I go into the forest clad in barks. I will eat fruits and roots together with Satrughna. I will sleep on the ground and wear matted hair. I shall stay there till Rama’s return. I solicit your kind permission to go. Please shower on me your cordial benediction.”

What a touching reply Bharata gave! His love and devotion for his brother were unparalleled. His noble example will continue to teach man. He was endowed with matchless virtues. That is the reason why he still lives in our hearts.

Bharata, with the help of Guha, crossed the Ganga and went immediately to the Ashram of Bharadvaja and prostrated before the Rishi. The Rishi entertained the royal party with sumptuous food and drink. Bharata saluted the Rishi the next morning and proceeded to Chitrakuta to see Sri Rama.

Coming near Chitrakuta, Bharata saw the footprints of Rama. He began to roll on the ground and reverentially placed the dust of Sri Rama’s feet on his head. He left his chariot and began to walk barefooted with his feet bleeding, because his Lord, Rama, had been walking all his way to the forest.

Lakshmana thought that Bharata was coming with his army as an enemy to kill them so that he might reign without any fear. He was ready to fight with him. Sri Rama said to Lakshmana, “Bharata is my devotee. I love him immensely. He can never entertain any evil intention against us. He is very noble and

magnanimous. The world has not produced a single man possessing the qualifications of Bharata. Therefore abandon such wrong ideas in your mind."

From a distance Bharata saw the abode of Sri Rama. He bowed with great reverence to every object belonging to his brother and Sri Sita. Sri Rama was highly pleased when he saw Bharata. He kissed and caressed him with great affection.

The next morning Bharata said to Sri Rama, "O venerable Lord, do thou install thyself on the throne. Protect the ancestral kingdom. Thou art like a father to me. Be thou gracious unto me. Do not think of the evil done by my wicked mother." Bharata placed his head with devotion at the feet of Sri Rama and prostrated himself on the ground before him.

Sri Rama raised him and said, "What you have said is right indeed. But I must obey my father's behests. He who disobeys his father's command and goes his own way is verily dead though living. He goes to hell after death. Therefore do thou protect the kingdom of the Dandaka forest. The fear of untruth is greater than even that of hell, to the great. I shall observe my father's promise made to Kaikeyi. How can I act untruthfully?"

Bharata said, "I shall live in the forest clad in barks and rags. I shall protect the kingdom for fourteen years."

Rama replied, "Thy father gave the kingdom to thee and the forest to me. If I act otherwise then I shall be acting untruthfully."

Bharata said, "I shall also live in the forest and serve thee like Lakshmana; otherwise I shall give up food till I abandon the body."

Then Bharata went to Sri Rama, took his two sacred sandals, circumambulated Sri Rama again and again, bowed to him reverentially and said with devotion, "O Rama, if, on the first day after fourteen years, you do not return, I shall enter the fire."

Sri Rama said, "Very well, my beloved Bharata."

Bharata, with his army, brother, mothers and sage Vasishtha prepared to leave the place. Kaikeyi said to Rama with tears in her eyes, "Under the influence of delusion I deprived thee of thy kingdom, O Rama. Forgive my sin. I am a great sinner. The good are always of forgiving nature. Protect me. Salutations unto thee. I take refuge in thee. Thou art Vishnu Himself."

Sri Rama replied, "The goddess of speech, prompted by me alone, came out of thy mouth in order to do the work of the gods. There is no fault of thine in it. Thou shalt be emancipated quickly by devotion unto me."

Bharata, with his ministers and mothers and Vasishtha quickly returned to Ayodhya thinking of Rama. He called the ministers and gave them valuable instructions and entrusted them with the work of the different departments of the state. He also invited the Brahmins of the state, honoured them in various ways and asked them to carry on their duties properly. He established all the subjects of his kingdom in the towns and provinces of Ayodhya, consoled and comforted them and asked them to remain always loyal to the throne. He entrusted his mothers to the loving care of Satrughna.

The sacred pair of sandals of Sri Rama was installed on the throne of Ayodhya with pomp and magnificence on an auspicious day.

Then Bharata went to his preceptor, Vasishtha and psked his permission to lead the life of an ascetic and perform penance. With his permission he threw off his boyal garments and put on barks. He went to Nandigram, built a hut there and dwelt like a hermit. He slept on a bed of straw and lived on roots and fruits with his senses under control, wearing matted locks. He used to worship daily the pair of sandals and never passed any state order without soliciting permission from them. He devoutly worshipped the sandals daily as if they were Rama himself, with flowers, rice and other kingly presents.

He renounced all the pleasures of the world. He regarded the throne of Ayodhya as a sacred trust committed to his charge for some years. He conducted the affairs of the state in a virtuous and just manner. He was extremely just and virtuous. There was peace everywhere. His sole aim was to further the welfare and the happiness of his subjects. All the subjects loved and revered him.

He recited the name of Rama always and Rama recited also the name of Bharata. He was Rama himself in another form. Bharata worshipped his brother Sri Rama. He served him like a humble servant.

Fourteen years expired. Sri Rama was returning to Ayodhya. On the first day after the fourteenth year, he kept ready a big fire to enter into if Sri Rama did not return to Ayodhya before sunset. Sri Rama knew this and sent Hanuman in advance to inform his brother of his arrival.

The news gave new life to Bharata. He put the pair of sandals on his head and proceeded to meet Sri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana with Satrughna, Sri Vasishtha, Sri Hanuman, Sumantra and other ministers.

It was a memorable meeting between the brothers. They embraced each other and shed tears of joy and love. Then Sri Rama ascended the throne on an auspicious day with great pomp and eclat. He reigned for a long time peacefully and earned an everlasting name in the world. As a king he was second to none.

Bharata's Skill in Archery

When the famous battle between Sri Rama and Ravana was going on, Lakshmana was hit by an arrow of Meghanada, the son of Ravana. He became unconscious. Sri Rama felt grieved. After some time Vibhishana consoled Rama and said, "O my Lord, Lakshmana is unconscious. If only we can fetch the Mritasanjeevani plant from the Mandara Mountains and administer it to him, he can be saved. Otherwise we cannot expect Lakshmana to live. The plant should be got before daybreak." Sri Rama requested Hanuman to get the plant as he was the only fit person to undertake such a difficult task. Mandara Mountains were thousands of miles away from Lanka.

Sri Hanuman with the blessings of Sri Rama left Lanka and in the twinkling of an eye reached his destination. For him this was easier than crossing the ocean. He searched for the plant. He could not trace the plant. So he thought it wise to carry the whole mountain and place it before Sri Rama.

While Hanuman was carrying the mountain Bharata observed him. It was during the early hours of the morning and Bharata was offering worship to Sri Rama. He thought to himself: "Some Rakshasa is moving in the sky with a big mountain to destroy my brother." So he at once shot an arrow at the demon and Hanuman fell down wounded, with the mountain, crying aloud, "Rama, Rama." Bharata was astonished and went near Hanuman who was unconscious. Bharata lamented over the sad condition of

Hanuman and said, “The same inevitable destiny which has cruelly separated me from my brother has sent me this additional grief. If my devotion to Rama is sincere let this poor soul survive.” Bharata sprinkled water over Hanuman repeating the name of Rama. Hanuman woke up immediately, uttering the name of Rama. Hanuman said, “O Bharata, you have done the greatest harm to Sri Rama. Lakshmana is on his death-bed. I was taking the Mritasanjeevani plant to save his life. Now I am delayed here and Lakshmana is sure to pass away within one hour.” Bharata embraced Hanuman with tears in his eyes and said, “My brother, excuse me. I was under the impression that some demon was moving in the sky with the big mountain to destroy my brothers and mother Janaki. Do not feel sorry. In a moment I shall send you back to Lanka.”

Saying thus, the great hero Bharata aimed another arrow at the mountain. The arrow lifted the mountain together with Hanuman and left them in front of Sri Rama before the appointed time. Hanuman was struck with wonder at the skill of Bharata and narrated the incident to Sri Rama and others who rejoiced immensely and shed tears of joy.

Bharata’s Sacrifice and Devotion

No worldly gain, no attainment, not even the status of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha could deviate Bharata from the purity of his devotion to Sri Rama. To him Sri Rama was the way, the truth, the life and the goal. He was ever ready to please Rama and carry out his commands cheerfully. He never disobeyed Sri Rama under any circumstances. His watchword was obedience to his brother Sri Rama. His love and reverence towards his brother are matchless in this world. You cannot find a second Bharata in the history of the world. The world has not produced his equal. Rama himself was not capable of describing the love which Bharata had for him.

The spirit of self-sacrifice was ingrained in him. He did not care for the rights of royalty and kingdom. He left them in favour of his absent brother. He led the life of an ascetic. No one else could have done this.

He practised self-denial and endurance. He spurned the pomp and glory of royalty. He was meek and simple He was a great Tyagi. He relinquished all the pleasures of the world like straw and cultivated divine qualities. Rama was his sole delight and joy.

Bharata’s life is an object lesson for all. His life teaches us that we should love our brothers and that we should lead a life of self-sacrifice, self-denial, austere penance, dispassion and devotion and that we should discharge our duties with faith, care, diligence and disinterestedness. We have to learn the lesson from him that we should be instruments of the Lord just as he was an instrument in the hands of Sri Rama. Even though there may be plenty of wealth and property we should consider that as God’s and not our own. His life further teaches that one can get God-realisation while remaining in the world. Bharata lived amidst the luxuries and temptations of the world and yet he was not a bit affected by them. He conducted the affairs of state in the most able manner and yet his mind was fixed on Rama and his tongue was always uttering “Rama, Rama.”

O noble Bharata, O mighty scion of Ikshvaku race or the solar dynasty, O pride of Sri Rama, grant us the inner strength to tread the path of righteousness! Show us the way to develop sincere devotion unto Sri Rama.

5. SATRUGHNA

Satrughna, son of Dasaratha by Sumitra was born at the same time as Lakshmana. He was an intimate companion of Bharata, just as Lakshmana was the close companion of Sri Rama. He also was well versed in the holy scriptures. He knew archery well.

Satrughna was married to Srutakirti, the daughter of Kushadhvaja, brother of King Janaka. The love between Bharata and Satrughna is indescribable. They dined together, slept together and put on the same kind of dress. Satrughna followed Bharata like a shadow. He took great delight in serving Bharata and carrying out his wishes with obedience and willingness.

He severely beat Manthara, the wicked maid-servant of Kaikeyi, and threw her down on the ground because he knew that it was she who instigated Kaikeyi to plot against Rama. The kind-hearted Bharata intervened and Satrughna was forced to set Manthara free.

When Bharata lived in Nandigram he asked Satrughna to remain in the palace and serve the three mothers. This was carried out faithfully by him.

He was courageous, just, noble and faithful. He lived to serve Bharata. He became one with Bharata.

6. DASARATHA

Svayambhu Manu was born as Dasaratha and Satarupa as Kausalya. They did severe penance in order to get Lord Hari as their son. The Lord gave them a promise and acted according to His promise. He was born as the son of Kausalya and Dasaratha.

King Dasaratha belonged to the solar dynasty. The blood of Ikshvaku ran in his veins. He was well versed in the Vedas. He was intelligent, truthful, kind, pious and brave. Dasaratha was a very powerful emperor. He was the greatest ruler of his time. Even the gods sought his help when they fought against the Asuras.

He had eight just and able ministers, viz., Dhreshti, Yayanta, Vijaya, Sureshtra, Vardhana, Dharmapala,Akopa and Sumantra. Saints like Vasishtha, Jabali, Suyajna, Kasyapa, Gautama, Markandeya and Kattyayana gave wise counsel to the king.

He ruled his kingdom justly. The innocent were well protected. The wicked, the licentious and the idle persons were banished from his kingdom. During his regime there were no dacoits. Life and property were perfectly safe.

He had three wives-Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Once King Dasaratha started to the forest on a hunting expedition. While he was on the look-out for a prey, he heard a sound which resembled that of an elephant drinking water. He sent a sharp arrow in the direction of the sound and the arrow hit a youth who was filling his pitcher with water. At once the youth began to cry aloud, falling down senseless on the ground. Hearing the cry, Dasaratha proceeded to the spot and found a Brahmin boy hit by his arrow. He felt great pity for the young boy and enquired who he was. The boy told the king that he was the only son of his parents who were both blind. He requested the king to take the pitcher of water to his cottage where his parents were eagerly waiting for water to drink. The Brahmin youth died

on the spot. Dasaratha reached the cottage with a heavy heart and saw the blind couple calling out for their son by his name. He replied to them and disclosed his identity. Then he narrated the fate of their son and begged pardon from them for his cruel and thoughtless action.

The blind parents of the Brahmin boy were sunk in an ocean of sorrow and cursed King Dasaratha, saying, “You will die of separation from your dearest son just as we do in your presence.”

The curse pronounced by the old Brahmin couple had its effect when Sri Rama left for Chitrakuta with Sri Lakshmana and Sita Devi and Dasaratha left his body calling “Rama, Rama.”

7. SRI HANUMAN

Sri Hanuman was born of Anjani from Pavana, the wind-god. He was named Hanuman after the name of the city of Hanumpur over which his maternal uncle Parti Surya ruled. Hanuman’s body was hard as a stone. So Anjani named him Vajranga. He is also known by the names “Mahavir” or mightiest hero (because he exhibited several heroic feats), Balibima and Maruti.

The world has not yet seen and will not see in future also a mighty hero like Sri Hanuman. During his life he worked wonders and exhibited superhuman feats of strength and valour. He has left behind him a name which, as long as the world lasts, will continue wielding a great influence over the minds of millions of people.

He is one of the seven Chiranjivis. He was the only learned scholar who knew the nine Vyakaranas. He learnt the Sastras from the sun-god. He was the wisest of the wise, strongest of the strong and bravest of the brave. He was the Sakti of Rudra. He who meditates on him and repeats his name attains power, strength, glory, prosperity and success in life. He is worshipped in all parts of India, particularly in Maharashtra.

He was born at the most auspicious hour of the morning of the 8th of the Lunar month, Chaitra, at 4 o’clock on the most blessed day, Tuesday.

He had the power to assume any form he liked; to swell his body to an enormous extent and to reduce it to the length of a thumb. His strength was superhuman. He was the terror of Rakshasas. He was well versed in the four Vedas and other sacred books. His valour, wisdom, knowledge of the scriptures and superhuman strength attracted everybody who came near him. He had extraordinary skill in warfare.

He was the chosen messenger, warrior and servant of Sri Rama. He was the votary and devotee of Lord Rama. Rama was his all in all. He lived to serve Rama. He lived in Rama. He lived for Rama. He was a minister and intimate friend of Sugriva.

From his very birth he exhibited extraordinary physical strength and worked many miracles.

When he was a child he put the sun into his mouth. All the gods were very much troubled. They came with folded hands to the child and humbly entreated him to release the sun. The child set free the sun at their request.

Hanuman saw Sri Rama for the first time in Kishkindha. Sri Rama and Lakshmana came there in the course of their search of Sita whom Ravana had carried away.

A Rishi pronounced a curse on Hanuman for his wrong action, that he would remain unconscious of his great strength and prowess till he met Sri Rama and served him with devotion. As soon as Hanuman beheld Sri Rama he became conscious of his strength and power.

In Lanka, Hanuman exhibited his immense strength and extraordinary powers. He destroyed the beautiful grove which was a pleasure resort of Ravana. He uprooted many trees and killed many Rakshasas. Ravana was very much infuriated at this. He sent Jambumali to fight against Sri Hanuman who took the trunk of a tree and hurled it against Jambumali and killed him. Ravana sent his son Akshaya to fight against Hanuman. He was also killed. Then he sent Indrajit. Hanuman threw a great tree upon Indrajit. Indrajit fell down senseless on the ground. After some time Indrajit recovered his consciousness. He threw the noose of Brahma on Hanuman. Hanuman allowed himself to be bound by the noose. He wanted to honour Brahma. Indrajit ordered the Rakshasas to carry the monkey to his father's court. Even a hundred Rakshasas were not ble to lift Hanuman.

Hanuman made himself as light as possible. The Rakshasas then lifted him up. When they placed him over their shoulders he suddenly became heavy and crushed them to death. Then Hanuman asked the Rakshasas to remove the rope. They removed the rope and Hanuman proceeded to the council hall of Ravana.

Ravana said, "O mischievous monkey, what will you say in your defence? I will put you to death." Hanuman laughed and said, "O wicked Ravana, give back Sita to Lord Rama and ask his pardon; otherwise you will be ruined and the whole of Lanka will be destroyed." These words of Hanuman made Ravana very furious. He asked the Rakshasas to cut off the head of Hanuman.

Vibhishana intervened and said, "O brother, it is not lawful and righteous to kill a messenger. You can inflict some punishment only."

Ravana consented. He wanted to deprive Hanuman of his tail and make him ugly. He ordered the Rakshasas to wrap Hanuman's tail with cloths soaked in oil and ghee. Hanuman extended his tail to such length and size that all the cloths in Lanka would not cover it. Then he reduced his tail of his own accord. The Rakshasas wrapped the tail with cloths soaked in oil and ghee and lighted the cloths. Hanuman expanded his body to an enormous size and began to jump from place to place. The whole of Lanka caught on fire. All the palatial buildings were burnt down to ashes.

Hanuman then jumped into the sea in order to cool and refresh himself. A drop of his perspiration fell into the mouth of a great fish which gave birth to a mighty hero named Makara Dhvaja. Makara Dhvaja is considered the son of Hanuman. Thereupon Hanuman went to the Asoka grove and told Sita all that he had done.

Then he crossed the sea through the air and came to the place where his army was placed. He told them all that had happened. Thereupon they all marched quickly to carry the good news to Sri Rama and Sugriva. They reached the city of Kishkindha. Hanuman gave Sita's ring to Lord Rama. Sri Rama rejoiced heartily. He praised Hanuman and embraced him saying, "O mighty hero I cannot repay your debt."

When all the brothers and sons of Ravana were killed, Ravana sent for his brother Ahi Ravana who was the king of the nether world. Ahi Ravana came to Lanka. Ravana asked his help to fight against Sri Rama and Lakshmana.

Ahi Ravana consented to help his brother. At the dead of night he assumed the form of Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana and an ally and devotee of Sri Rama.

He reached the place where Rama and Lakshmana were sleeping. Hanuman was keeping watch. He thought that was Vibhishana who was coming. Therefore he all that him to enter the camp. Ahi Ravana quietly took tllowed brothers upon his shoulders and repaired to his kingdom.

When the day dawned, Hanuman found out that Sri Rama and Lakshmana were missing. He found out that Ahi Ravana had carried them to his kingdom. At once he proceeded to the nether world and received information that Ahi Ravana had made arrangements to kill the two brothers in sacrifice. Hanuman assumed a tiny form, entered the temple and sat over the image of the goddess. The image went down into the earth. Hanuman took her seat. When Ahi Ravana was about to sacrifice the two brothers, Hanuman appeared in his own form and killed him. He installed Makara Dhvaja, his own son on the throne, took the brothers on his shoulders and brought them to Lanka.

Hanuman killed many heroes in the great war. Dhumar, Vajro, Roshat, Ankhan and several other great warriors were killed by him.

When the great war was over, Vibhishana was installed on the throne of Lanka. The time of banishment was about to be over. Sri Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Sri Hanuman sat in the Pushpaka Vimana or aeroplane and reached Ayodhya in time.

The coronation ceremony of Lord Rama was celebrated with great eclat and pomp. Sita gave Hanuman a necklace of pearls of rare quality. Hanuman received it with great respect and began to break the pearls with his teeth. Sita and other ministers who were sitting in the council hall were quite astonished at this queer act of Hanuman.

Sita asked Hanuman, “O mighty hero, what are you doing? Why do you break the pearls?” Sri Hanuman said, O venerable mother, it is the most valuable necklace indeed as it has come to me through thy holy hand. But I want to find out whether any of the pearls contain my beloved Lord Rama. I do not keep a thing devoid of him. 1 do not find him in any of the pearls.” Sita asked, “Tell me whether you keep Lord Rama within you.” Sri Hanuman immediately tore open his heart and showed it to Sri Rama, Sita and others. They all found Lord Rama accompanied by Sita in the heart of Sri Hanuman.

Lord Rama rejoiced heartily. He came down the throne and embraced Hanuman and blessed him. Sri Hanuman passed the rest of his life in the company of the Lord.

When Sri Rama ascended to his supreme abode, Sri Hanuman also wished to follow him. But the Lord asked him to remain in this world as his representative and attend all the assemblies of men where discourses on his deeds were held and heard, and help his devotees in cultivating devotion.

He is a Chiranjeevi. He is everywhere. He who has eyes and devotion beholds him and receives his blessing.

Hanuman ranks first amongst the heroes of the world. His heroic deeds, wonderful exploits and marvellous feats of strength and bravery cannot be adequately described. His sense of duty was extremely laudable. He had great skill in all military tactics and methods of warfare. His crossing the sea of thirty miles in one leap and lifting the crest of a mountain in the palm of the hand, his carrying of the

brothers on his shoulders from the nether world to Lanka are all astounding, superhuman feats which baffle human description.

He conquered innumerable difficulties which cropped up in his way through his courage, patience and undaunted spirit. He made untiring search to find Sita. At the time of danger he exhibited marvellous courage and presence of mind. He was steady and firm in his actions. He was always successful in his attempts. Failure was not known to him. He gave up his life in the service of the Lord. He had not a tinge of selfishness in his actions. All his actions were offerings unto Lord Rama. No one reached the peak in Dasya Bhava like Sri Hanuman. He was a rare jewel among devotees, the supreme head among Pundits, the king among celibates and the commander among heroes and warriors.

O mighty Hanuman, untiring and devoted Sevak of Sri Rama, joy of Anjana, king of Brahmacharins, show us the secrets of Brahmacharya and the ways to attain purity in thought, word and deed. May India have such heroes and Brahmacharins ever more!

Where Hanuman is, there are Sri Rama and Sri Sita and wherever Sri Rama and Sri Sita are praised and their deeds recited, there Hanuman is.

Glory to Hanuman, the blessed devotee of Lord Rama. Glory, glory to Sri Anjaneya, the mighty hero, undaunted warrior and learned Brahmacharin, the like of whom the world has not yet seen and will not see in time to come.

May his blessings be upon you all. Let us sing his glory now:

Jaya Siya Ram Jaya, Jaya Siya Ram

Jaya Hanuman Jaya, Jaya Hanuman.

8. JATAYU AND SAMPATI

Jatayu and Sampati were descendants of Garuda, the king of all birds. Jatayu was a vulture and the younger brother of Sampati. They were born in the region of the Himalayas. They loved each other dearly.

Jatayu was a friend of King Dasaratha. On one occasion he saved the life of Dasaratha when he was thrown down along with his car by Saturn during a fight.

Jatayu and Sampati often raced in the air. One day they wanted to reach the sun. They soared higher and higher in the air. At last it became difficult for them to bear the rays of the sun. Jatayu nearly fainted but the merciful Sampati spread his large wings over his brother. Jatayu was saved but Sampati's wings were singed and he fell down senseless on the Vindhya Mountains. After some time he recovered consciousness and slowly dragged himself to the cave of a saint.

He said to the saint, "O holy sage, I have lost my wings. Let me die." The sage said, "You will not gain anything by death. Wait patiently for some time. The time will come for you to serve a great person. Through his service, you will regain your power to fly."

Sampati acted in accordance with the instructions of the sage. He waited patiently. His son Suparsva brought him food daily.

An army of monkeys came near Sampati. They were sent by Sugriva to search for Sita. Sugriva would kill them if they did not find her. The monkeys searched in vain. They were in a desperate condition. They resolved to sit there, starve and die. Angada, their leader related to them the story of the death of Jatayu.

Sampati dragged himself closer to the monkeys to hear the tale of his brother. They repeated to him how Jatayu died. Then Sampati told them his own story. The monkeys requested Sampati to help them in their mission of finding Sita.

Sampati replied, "I can tell you where she is. My son Suparsva returned the other day without any food for me. I asked him the reason for his not bringing food for me. He replied, 'My father, I could not find any living creature today. They were all hiding themselves. I beheld a huge monster with ten heads. He was coming towards me. He had a very handsome woman in his arms. She cried to Rama for help. I wanted to help her, but the demon behaved very courteously towards me and requested me to leave him alone. As he was courteous, as he treated me with respect, I also treated him with courtesy and respect. I allowed him to go. Afterwards I found out that the demon was Ravana, the king of Lanka.

All living creatures hid themselves on account of fear of Ravana.'

"I am endowed with a powerful vision. I can see objects even at a distance of one hundred Yojanas. Now I can tell you where Sita is. There is the land of Lanka in the southern sea. Ravana has carried Sita away there. Make a vigorous search there. You will surely find her."

Now Sampati developed new wings and had a desire to fly. The words of the saint turned to be true. Sampati served the cause of Sri Rama and was blessed with fresh wings through his grace. He flew in the air again with great joy.

Jatayu was devoted to God. When Ravana was carrying away Sita, Jatayu heard her cries and fought against Ravana in order to rescue Sita. Ravana cut off the two wings of Jatayu. Jatayu fell on the ground mortally wounded.

He remained in that condition till Sri Rama came to the spot in the course of his search of Sita. The noble bird told the whole sad story to Sri Rama and then died. It was Jatayu who first informed Sri Rama that Sita had been carried away by Ravana.

Sri Rama put Jatayu on his lap, washed the blood from the wound with the tresses of his hair and consoled him. Jatayu breathed his last on the lap of Sri Rama. Sri Rama himself performed his funeral rites. What a fortunate being Jatayu was! No other devotee save Jatayu had enjoyed till now the rare fortune of dying on the lap of Sri Rama.

Sri Rama showed to Jatayu the same reverence he had for his father. He gave him the same status in the other world as was given to Dasaratha. Noble Jatayu sacrificed his life for the cause of Sri Rama.

It is not necessary that one should be born as a Brahmin to attain final emancipation. God gives salvation even to the birds. What is wanted is sincere and one-pointed devotion to the Lord.

Glory to the high-souled Jatayu, the greatest hero among the birds, who looked to Sri Rama's interest in all possible ways, who gave up his life for Sri Rama's cause and won the highest distinction among devotees and whose life even now inspires men to tread the path of devotion and struggle for attaining God-realisation!

9. VALI

Vali was a powerful monkey. He was the Amsa of Indra. He could travel from the eastern ocean to the western one and from the southern to the northern one. He could ascend mountains and uproot big trees. He destroyed the powerful Asura, Dundubhi who was in the form of a buffalo. Vali had a boon. He could get half the strength of anyone who stood to fight against him.

Sugriva doubted the valour and strength of Sri Rama, Sri Rama said, "O Sugriva, I shall give you convincing proofs of my valour and strength." Sri Rama pushed the skeleton of Dundubhi with the toe to ten Yojanas. Sugriva said, "O Lord Rama, now pierce a palm tree with your arrow. Then I shall be able to judge the might of yourself and Vali. Vali pierced these seven palms many times."

Thereupon Sri Rama, to create confidence in Sugriva, took up his bow and sent an arrow against the palms. It pierced through the seven palms, a rock and the innermost region of the earth and again came back to the quiver in a minute. Only in the cases of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna did the arrow come back to the quiver. Sugriva was struck with great wonder. He had perfect confidence in the powers of Sri Rama.

Sri Rama helped Sugriva in his fight with Vali. He sent a shaft which pierced the breast of Vali. The heroic Vali fell prostrate to the ground.

Vali spoke to Sri Rama: "Rama, I was fighting with another man. Why did you strike me down? You are born in a noble family. You are supposed to be heroic, mighty, compassionate and virtuous. You always take care of the welfare of the people. But now I find you are wicked and unrighteous. You are a hypocrite. I have not done any wrong either to you or your city or province. You are a famous king. You are born of a Kshatriya family. How could you commit this dastardly act? You ought to have destroyed me in a fair and open fight. Tell me why you are wandering about in the guise of a mendicant. You are haughty, fickle and too narrow-minded in the discharge of royal duties. Tell me how you could justify your action. You have committed a great sin in destroying me. You are wicked, treacherous and mean. You have no character. You have deviated from the path of righteousness. It was difficult to attack me, so you struck me by concealing yourself from my view just as a serpent bites a man when asleep."

Sri Rama replied, "Vali, you are childish. You are quite ignorant of duty. You have not learnt anything from the elders or preceptors. You have blamed me through your childishness and ignorance.

"You are irreligious and passionate. You have no character. You have violated the duties of a king. The elder brother and preceptor should be regarded as one's own father. The younger brother or disciple should be treated as one's own son. Now hear why I have killed you. You have violated the eternal principles of righteousness and have outraged your younger brother's wife. His wife Ruma is in the position of your daughter-in-law. You have committed unpardonable sin by securing her. You have violated religion. Therefore I have punished you. Death is the only proper punishment for a man who

goes against immemorable customs. I am born in a noble Kshatriya line and I cannot overlook your crimes.

"I had also promised to help Sugriva. He is my friend. How can I break my promise? It is my duty to punish you. The king who does not punish the offender commits a great sin. I have chastised you in accordance with the code of morality. A king is governed by religion.

"I have something more to tell you. I have not deviated from the path of righteousness by striking you from concealment. I promised to help Sugriva from behind, if he failed to defeat you. I am justified in striking you thus. Men kill or capture animals in various ways by means of the noose or trap, either openly or by lying in ambush. You are only an animal. Even pious princes hunt in the forest. You are a monkey. It does not matter whether you fought me or not. The king is the defender of his people. His duty is to do them justice. I have only done my duty. You have no idea of right and wrong. Therefore you are unjustly accusing me out of anger."

Vali attained spiritual insight and thought that Rama was absolutely innocent. He then said to Rama with folded hands, "You are virtuous. I am a sinner. Please forgive me. Kindly protect me. Angada is my son. He is very dear to me. He is a mere boy. Please protect him also."

Sri Rama consoled Vali and said, "O Vali, now you are free from guilt. Abandon all your sorrows and fear. I shall take care of Angada. I shall treat him with great affection."

Then Vali gave up his mortal coil and passed into silence.

Sri Rama was Vishnu Himself though he appeared like a man. Divine dispensation is always beyond the reach of the social and moral laws of insignificant, puny men of little understanding. It is mere foolishness to question the actions of the omniscient and omnipotent Avatara whether they are justifiable or not. It is the height of one's own folly only. Wise people will never do so.

10. LAVA AND KUSA

Lava and Kusa were the sons of Sri Rama. They were twin brothers in the Ashram of Rishi Valmiki.

Sri Rama could not bear the criticism of the washerman in accepting Sita who lived in Lanka, the kingdom of Ravana. So he commanded Lakshmana to leave Sita in the forest. Sita was then pregnant. She could not bear the separation of the Lord. She was weeping aloud on the banks of the river Ganga when sage Valmiki came to the spot and enquired of Sita as to the cause of her grief. The sage was moved to pity and entrusted Sita to the women of his Ashram.

In the course of time Sita gave birth to a boy. He was called Lava. Kusa was created by sage Valmiki and resembled Lava in all respects. He was therefore brought up by Sita as her son and the twin brother of Lava.

Lava and Kusa were brought up in the midst of congenial surrounding under the direct guardianship of Rishi Valmiki. They had all the virtues of Kshatriya Princes to the highest degree. They sang to music the Ramayana of Valmiki for the first time in the Durbar of Sri Rama and in the streets of Ayodhya. They were specially trained by Rishi Valmiki.

Lava was a boy warrior. He was modest, bold, humble and noble. He resembled his father in every respect in his features and outward form. He had the same voice, the same dignity, the same awe-inspiring majesty as those of his father. His martial spirit was most wonderful. He even opposed his father with undaunted intrepidity and matchless valour. He could not brook the overbearing attitude of his opponent or rival however great he might be. The martial fire was burning in Kusa also. He was the worthy brother of Lava. He also possessed all noble virtues. He had extraordinary manliness.

Sri Rama made arrangements to perform an Asvamedha Yajna. The sacrificial horse was let off to wander throughout the country to receive the reverence of all the subjects and the kings who ruled smaller countries. As the horse passed through the hermitage of Lava and Kusa they tied it to a tree in front of the Ashram.

Lakshmana was following the horse. He found the horse tied to a tree in front of Valmiki's Ashram where Lava and Kusa lived. Then Lakshmana enquired as to who stopped the horse and he was told that Lava and Kusa had tied the horse to the tree.

Lakshmana said, "O boy saints, what do you gain by stopping the sacrificial horse? Untie it soon. Ask for anything that you like in return." Lava and Kusa replied, "We would not leave the horse. Fight with us, defeat us and then take the horse."

Lakshmana could not defeat Lava and Kusa. He then went to fetch Hanuman, Sri Rama, Bharata and Satrughna. There took place a formidable fight in which Lava and Kusa bound with cords all except Sri Rama. Sri Rama took a very powerful arrow and fixed the aim at Lava and Kusa when Sage Valmiki stopped Sri Rama saying, "O Rama, these boys are your own sons. Do not kill them. Take them to Ayodhya." Sri Rama was much pleased. Lava and Kusa prostrated before Sri Rama and got his blessings. Later on Sage Valmiki took Lava and Kusa to Ayodhya for the Asvamedha sacrifice.

11. RAVANA

Ravana was the brother of Kubera, a Lokapala or guardian in charge of the north, the Lord of all treasures and a close friend of Lord Siva. He was not really a Rakshasa or Daitya or Asura or Danava. He descended from Brahma. He was the son of Visravas who was the son of Pulastya. Pulastya was the son of Brahma.

Ravana had two brothers, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. All the three brothers did severe Tapas and saw Brahma face to face. Brahma enquired of the brothers what boon they desired of him.

Vibhishana, who was endowed with Sattvic qualities desired devotion to Vishnu; Kumbhakarna wanted the destruction of all the Devas. The Devas found out the desire of Kumbhakarna and ran to Sarasvati, wife of Brahma for help. Sarasvati was present in the tongue of the demon Kumbhakarna when he (Kumbhakarna) asked for the boon. By a slight error in pronunciation Kumbhakarna asked that he may be blessed with sleep instead of the extinction of the Devas which he had thought of. For "Nirdevatva" he uttered "Nidravatva" and thus missed the goal.

Ravana desired that he should not meet with death at the hands of any demon or god or any beast. In his pride he forgot to mention the name of man, because he was sure that no man could kill him.

Ravana married Mandodari, the daughter of Maya. Through Mandodari he begot a son who was called Meghanada. When the child was born there was a roar of thunder and so he was named Meghanada.

Meghanada was very brave and courageous. He had wonderful powers. He defeated even Indra, the Lord of the gods and got the name Indrajit.

Ravana ill-treated the people very much. He enslaved the gods and many beautiful ladies. At last when his cruelties became unbearable the gods approached Vishnu for help and He incarnated as Sri Rama to destroy Ravana.

Ravana was a great devotee of Lord Siva. He did severe penance. Rishis and Devas could not compete with him in the practice of rigorous austerities. He always challenged the Devas and Rishis and subdued them by manifesting his power and strength of Tapascharya, Twice he obtained from Lord Siva, His five heads as the reward for his Tapas. He always worshipped Lord Siva in the form of Linga.

He challenged Nandi, and by his curse turned his face to that of a monkey. Nandi took vengeance and became Hanuman, the leader of a host of monkeys and brought about the destruction of Lanka and Ravana's companions.

Ravana said to Hanuman when he was tied up by Indrajit and brought before him, "Are you not that Nandi whom I cursed in Kailasa to have the face of a monkey?"

Section Five

SRI RAMA'S TEACHINGS

1. SRI RAMA'S INSTRUCTIONS TO LAKSHMANA

1. On Worship

Sri Lakshmana said, "I wish to hear, O Raghuvir, the method of Thy worship, which has been declared by devotees like Narada and Vyasa to be the easy means of emancipation."

Sri Rama said, "Let the twice-born man who has put on the sacred thread and received the Mantra from his preceptor worship Me with faith according to his instructions, either in his own heart or through images and the like or in the fire or the Saligram stone. Let him first take a bath in the morning. He should perform the Sandhya and other duties in accordance with the rites. He should make a Sankalpa for the successful termination of all actions. He should then worship his preceptor as if he were My own Self.

"He should then bathe the images made of stone in water. He should clean the images if they are made of clay or cloth and then offer flowers, perfumes, etc. He should worship Me with a concentrated mind according to the method taught by his preceptor. Decoration of images with flowers is dear-to Me. If water is offered with devotion it is very dear to Me.

"Let him sit on a seat of Kusha grass, skin and cloth and face the image. Let him place a vessel of water to his left and flowers and the like to the right for the purpose of Arghya, Padya and Madhuparka. Arghya is offering of water, rice, grass, etc. The Padya is the offering of water for washing the feet. Madhuparka is the offering of honey and curds to the gods.

"He should place four vessels for the purpose of sipping water. Let him then meditate on Me in the lotus of the heart as the Light of lights. Let him invoke that light or energy in the image. Let him worship Me without guile with Padya, Arghya, water for Achamana (sipping), ablution, clothes, ornaments according to his means.

"Let him worship Me daily with camphor, Kumkum, sandalwood, Agaru, flowers, burning of incense, lamps, waving of lights, etc. Let him offer these with faith daily. I accept whatever is offered with faith and devotion.

"Let him perform carefully the Homa according to rule and offer libation to the fire with the help of Mulamantra or the Purusha Sukta and make oblations of rice, barley and ghee. Let him meditate upon Me as of the lustre of gold, adorned with gems and dwelling in the midst of fire at the time of the Homa.

"Let him offer betel leaf and other things. Let him control his speech and recite the sacred Mantras. Let him meditate on Me.

"Let him dance, sing My praise, read My prayers, recite My Lilas in My honour. Let him place upon his head My Prasada, full of faith. With his hands let him place My feet on his head with devotion. Let him

bow unto Me saying, 'O Lord, protect me from this terrible Samsara.' Let him meditate on Me in his heart as the light within.

"If he duly worships Me by the above methods he attains success here and hereafter through My grace. He becomes like Myself through constant worship. My worship is a great purifier."

2. RAMA HRIDAYAM

The Lord Mahadeva said, "Then Rama Himself said to Hanuman, Listen now to the truth about the individual self (Jivatman), not-self (Anatma) and the supreme Self (Paramatman).

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'Just as there seems to be three kinds of space, viz., absolute space (Mahakasa), space limited by a jar (Ghatakasa) and space reflected in the water that is in the jar (Jala-Pratibimbakasa), so also there is the intelligence or Chaitanya limited by Antahkarana, reflected Chaitanya and absolute Chaitanya. In this way intelligence is also threefold.

The idea of the doer (agency) which is the function of the intellect as reflected in the Buddhi or intellect together with the idea of Jiva (individual self) is superimposed on the limitless, the pure, the witness (Sakshi), absolute Chaitanya, by the foolish or the ignorant.

The reflection of the intelligence or Chaitanya is a wrong notion, as it is the result of Avidya or ignorance. Brahman or the supreme Self is free from limitations. Limitation is only a superimposition (Adhyasa) on Him.

The identity of the illimitable Brahman with the reflected self (Jiva or the individual soul) which underlies the idea of egoism is established through the great sentence or Mahavakya like 'Tat Tvam Asi'-Thou Art That.'

When knowledge of oneness or unity arises from meditation on the great sentence Tat Tvam Asi', Avidya, with all its offshoots is annihilated. There is no doubt in this.

'Knowing this, My devotee attains to My own Self. Let those who are destitute of devotion to Me roll in the abyss of the scriptures. There is neither knowledge nor emancipation for them even through hundreds of incarnations.

'O Hanuman, O thou faultless one, this profound mystery of the heart (essence) of My own Self has been in truth declared to thee. Let this not be revealed to one who has no faith in Me and who is of evil disposition, albeit he gives for it a dominion greater than that of Indra himself.'"

The Lord Mahadeva said, "Thus, O Parvati, I have declared unto thee the mystery or heart of Rama (Rama-Hridaya). It is a deep secret. It is dear to the heart. It is a great purifier and destroyer of sin. This was declared by Rama Himself. It is the essence or compendium of all the Vedanta. Whoever always reads it with faith attains salvation. There is no doubt in this. Sins like that of killing a Brahmin, even though committed in many lives are destroyed by this. There is no doubt in this, because this is the saying of Rama Himself.

"He who is greatly fallen, who is a man of extremely sinful acts, who is always hankering after other people's wealth and wives, who is a thief, who is guilty of the sin of killing a Brahmin, father and mother, who has done evil to Yogins, even if such a man reads this Rama-Hridaya with faith he attains a state which is adored by all gods and which even Yogins cannot attain."

3. RAMA GITA

I

Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, whose mind had been purified by devotion, approached Lord Rama with reverence and faith, made his prostrations and said:-

"O Lord, Thou art pure knowledge. Thou art the soul of all beings. Thou art the Lord. Thou art harmless. Thou art known to those who have attained knowledge of the Self and whose minds are always attached to Thy lotus-feet like a bee to the lotus flower.

"I take refuge in Thy lotus-feet which secure the final emancipation from the rounds of births and deaths and which are adored by Yogins, sages and saints. Kindly teach me, O venerable Lord, that knowledge by which I may quickly and easily cross this impassable ocean of ignorance."

Thereupon Rama imparted to Lakshmana that knowledge which is declared by the Vedas for the eradication of ignorance. The aspirant should first perform in a disinterested manner without caring for fruits all those duties which are enjoined for one's own caste and order and purify his mind. He should acquire the necessary qualifications or the four means of salvation, viz., Viveka (discrimination between the real and the unreal), Vairagya (dispassion), Shad-Sampat or the sixfold virtues, viz., Sama (control of the mind), Dama (control of senses), Uparati (cessation from worldly work), Titiksha (power of endurance), Sraddha (faith), Samadhana (one-pointedness of mind) and Mumukshuttva (burning desire for liberation).

II

All works lead to rebirths. Man does good and bad actions (Dharma and Adharma) and reaps the fruits of his actions, viz., pleasure and pain. Karma produces body and from body arises work. In this way the course of worldly life (Samsara) revolves like a wheel without an end.

The root cause of it is ignorance (Avidya or Ajnana). Removal of ignorance is the only means for destroying this cause of worldly life. Knowledge alone is capable of annihilating this ignorance. Action (Karma) cannot destroy it, because it is born of ignorance and is not its contrary or opposite.

The performance of action does not destroy ignorance and attachment. It leads to further action and perishable and transitory fruits. Sometimes one goes up and takes a high birth, sometimes one goes down and takes a low birth, now happy, now miserable. Therefore, let the sage abandon action and devote himself to knowledge and meditation on the truths of the Vedanta.

An objector says, "Action is also enjoined by the Vedas as conducive to the highest end of man, Le.. knowledge. Action (Karma) is prescribed for one who has a body. It eventually becomes the helpmate of Vidya (knowledge). The Vedas proclaim that giving up of action is sinful. Let the seeker after salvation, therefore, always engage himself in doing works."

But the sage replies, “Vidya (knowledge) is quite independent. It is certain in its results. It does not require any helpmate or aid even in thought.”

The Karma Kandin or the advocate of works says, “It is true that knowledge is independent and certain in its results; Vedic sacrifice also requires other aids like time and place for its accomplishment. Similarly, Vidya, illumined by works duly performed leads to the attainment of salvation in a special manner.”

Some logicians hold the view that the combination of knowledge and work (Karma Jnana Samuchaya) is conducive to salvation. This is certainly not true, because it involves contradiction. Work is done through the idea of T’ in the body, whereas knowledge arises from the elimination of the idea of ‘I’ in the body and the like.

Let the wise man, therefore, abandon all works. There can be no combination of knowledge and work because knowledge is opposed to work.

Let him withdraw the senses from all objects and devote himself always to the attainment of Self-realisation.

As long as there is the notion of ‘I’ in the body and the like, due to the influence of Maya, so long one is bound by the injunction of the Vedas for works. Let the wise man sublate or eliminate the whole of it through the doctrine of ‘Neti, Neti’ (not this, not this) and abandon all works, knowing the highest Brahman or the Eternal.

When one attains Brahma Jnana, when the knowledge which destroys the idea of the separation of the supreme soul from the individual soul dawns in the purified internal organ, then Maya along with its offshoots or effects which cause birth and death and action, vanishes immediately.

When ignorance is destroyed by knowledge it cannot produce actions which lead to further births. When ignorance has been annihilated by knowledge which is pure and non-dual, how shall it again arise?

When ignorance is once annihilated it cannot arise again. How then can there be any idea of “I am the doer (Karta), I am the enjoyer (Bhokta)”? Therefore knowledge is quite independent. It requires nothing for its fructification. It is certain in its results. It does not stand in need of any helping agent. It alone is quite sufficient in order to secure the final salvation.

The Sruti of the Kaivalya Upanishad has declared: “All actions should be abandoned.” The Vajasaneya Upanishad also proclaims: “This alone is Moksha.” Therefore knowledge alone and not action is the means of salvation.

The fruits of the two are distinct. Sacrifice is done through various instruments like actor, instruments and the like. On the contrary knowledge is not accomplished by these but by other means.

It is only the intellect of one who superimposes the Self (Atman) upon the not-self (Anatma) that entertains the idea of sin in the non-performance of action. The intellect of the sage has no such idea. Therefore the wise should renounce action which is enjoined as obligatory. It is meant only for those, whose minds are attached to the fruit of action.

III

Let one who has got faith through a pure mind and the grace of his Guru (teacher) know the oneness of the supreme Soul with the individual soul through the great sentence or Mahavakya "Tat Tvam Asi-Thou Art That," and be happy and stable like the Meru Mountain.

The way for realising the significance of the great sentence "Tat Tvam Asi," free from all doubts and uncertainty, is knowledge of the meaning of the three words "Tat," "Tvam," "Asi" which it consists of. "Tat" signifies the supreme Self with His attributes of omniscience and the like. "Tvam" signifies the individual soul. "Asi" (is) connects the two.

Eliminate the Upadhi or limiting adjuncts of the individual soul, such as Avidya and its effects, viz., physical body, mind, intellect, Prana, the senses, the notion of "I" in the body, etc., as the Dharmas of the Upadhis, viz., attributes such as small intelligence, small power and sublate the Upadhi of Isvara, viz., Maya and Dharmas of the Upadhi, viz., omnipotence, omniscience and attributes of creation, preservation and destruction. Retain the pure intelligence in the two cases, the final significance or Lakshyartha as illustrated in the Jahad-Ajahad Lakshana described below and abide in the unity of the Self.

The Vachyartha of Tat Pada (literal meaning) is Isvara. The Lakshyartha of Tat Pada (indicative meaning) is Brahman. The Vachyartha of Tvam Pada is Jiva. The Lakshya Artha of Tvam Pada is Kutastha Brahman or Pratyagatman. Identity is shown between Brahman, the substratum of Isvara and Kutastha, the substratum of Jiva.

When the limiting adjuncts, viz., the pot and walls of the room are broken, the ether in the pot and in the room become identical with the universal ether. When the body-pot is broken by the dawn of knowledge, the individual soul becomes one with the supreme Self.

The identity can only through Jahad-Ajahad Lakshana justlys be shown "He is the same person whom I saw-Soyam Devadatta." This is the method of unification through elimination.

IV

Adhe body composed of the five elements is the Upadhi or the vehicle of Atman he have beginning and an end. It is born of Maya. It is the place of the enjoyment of the fruit of action, Viz., pleasure and pain.

The subtle body consists of mind, intellect, the five organs of knowledge (Jnana Indriyas), the five organs of action (Karma Indriyas) and the five Pranas or vital airs. This subtle body (Linga Sarira) moves the gross body. It goes from birth to birth.

Maya is the casual body of the Lord. It is beginningless and inscrutable. It is indescribable and incomprehensible (Anirvachaniya). Through superimposition Brahman appears as Isvara and Jiva. Realise your Self through sublation of all adjuncts. Practise "Neti, Neti" doctrine and identify yourself with the supreme Self.

The crystal appears to be red when it is placed near a red flower. Even so this Atman appears to be of the form of the five sheaths because of its proximity to them. When one meditates on the saying of the Upanishad: "Asangoyam Purusha-this Purusha is unattached," then he realises that the Atman is unattached, unborn and without a second.

This Atman is neither an actor nor a thinker. All these are due to the action of the mind and the Prana. Verily He is unattached. “Dhyativa Lolayativa-He appears as if meditating, as if moving.”

The conditions of the intellect (Buddhi) are threefold, viz., waking, dream and deep sleep. They are due to its association with the Gunas of Sattva (goodness), Rajas (activity) and Tamas (inertia). They are not the true conditions of the supreme Self because one of them is absent when the other is present. Therefore, they are all unreal. They cannot certainly be of the nature of the supreme Self which is unity and bliss itself.

As long as the intellect has for its roots the Gunas of Rajas and Tamas and partakes of the nature of ignorance and functions as “I” in this body which is a combination of the five elements, the senses, the Pranas and the Atman, so long does the Samsara exist.

“I am the body,” “I am the organ,” “I am the life-breath,” “I am a Brahmin,” “I am happy,” “I am miserable,” “I have lost this,” “I have gained this,” “I am deaf,” “I am intelligent,” “I am tall,” “I am black” all these and other functions of everyday life are due to the identification of the Atman with the action of the intellect. All these notions are verily in the intellect but not in the pure Atman. They are taken to be in the Atman. They are taken to be in the Atman through beginningless ignorance (Anadyavidya). As long as this continues the course of worldly life runs on.

Eliminate the whole world through the practice of “Neti, Neti” doctrine. Develop pure Sattva. Meditate. Realise. Taste. Taste the nectar of Atman and renounce the world just as one throws the skin and shell of the mango fruit after sucking out the juice.

The Atman never dies nor is born. It is not subject to increase or decrease. It is never new or never old. It is beyond all additions to its greatness. It is of the nature of bliss itself, self-luminous, all-pervading and one without a second. It is illimitable and undecaying.

When such is the nature of Atman which is all-intelligence, all-bliss, how can the Samsara, which is full of sorrow, misery and pain appear to exist in it or for it? It appears to exist on account of ignorance and superimposition (Adhyasa) of the attributes of Atman upon Anatma or non-self. When the knowledge of Atman dawns, this world vanishes immediately. It cannot live in the same place as it is its contrary, just as darkness

Cannot exist in the presence of light. Adhyasa or superimposition is said to be that which, though different from one thing is to imposed on it through illusion. Just as the snake is superimposed on the rope, so also the world is superimposed on Brahman.

On account of superimposition the Atman is taken to be of the world, happy, miserable, born, dying, etc.

The idea of “I” (I am, Aham Asmi) is the first superimposition in the Atman which is free from imperfection, which is secondless, which is free from all modifications of the mind and which transcends Maya.

The functions of the intellect in the form of desire and the like, attachment and pleasure and the like, are the causes of Samsara or the cause of worldly life; because during deep sleep when all the functions of the mind cease, the supreme Self is realised by us to be the nature of bliss itself.

In the Buddhi the reflection of Chit is called the individual soul or Jiva. Verily Brahman or supreme Self is the witness. He is not limited by Buddhi or intellect. He is unconditioned.

The Atman and intellect each appear to partake of the attributes of the other mutual connection or superimposition. The intelligent nature of the Atman appears in the intellect and the non-intelligent nature of the intellect in the Atman. This is called Chit-jada or the knot between Atman and intellect. Just as the iron partakes of the nature of fire when it is placed in the fire, so also the intellect partakes of the nature of the intelligent Atman because of its proximity to the Atman. Buddhi has no intelligence of its own. It borrows from the Atman which is all-intelligence. The Atman becomes the embodied Self or Jiva and takes himself to be happy or miserable, born or dying. This is mutual superimposition (Annyonya Adhyasa).

Attain knowledge of Atman. Realise the Atman as free from all adjuncts or limitations. Renounce all that is non-intelligent and the cause of this worldly life.

V

Always meditate on the Atman with an intellect directed to no other object, in the following manner: "I am the Light of lights. I am unborn. I am secondless. I am self-luminous. I am deathless. I am ever pure. I am an embodiment of knowledge. I am free from all defects. I am all-full. I am bliss itself. I am non-doer of action. I am ever free. I am unlimited. I am unfathomable. I am all-powerful. I am He who is ever realised in their own selves by the sages who are devoted to the study of the Vedas. I am free from all modifications. My knowledge transcends the senses."

Then you will attain self-realisation. Knowledge of Brahman will arise. You will get purity of thought. Then you will soon destroy all actions which cause rebirth along with Avidya, the root cause for all actions, just as a

Sick person destroys disease by taking the elixir of life. Purify the mind. Sit in a solitary place. Withdraw all the senses from their objects. Bring the mind under control. Introspect. Direct your attention towards knowledge of the Self. Think only of Atman and abide in

Your own Self.

All this universe verily is Brahman. Merge the world in Brahman, the cause of all causes. He who has done this, abides in his own Self which is full and bliss itself. He does not know anything inside or outside. Brahman alone is within and Brahman alone is without.

Meditate on the feeling that all this universe is nothing but OM. OM is the expression. It is the symbol of Brahman. The universe is the thing expressed. Meditation ceases when one attains knowledge of Brahman.

The letter "A" in "AUM" expresses the Visva, "U" expresses the Taijasa and the "M" the Prajna.

Merge the Visva represented by "A" in the "U" (Taijasa). Merge the Taijasa in "M". Merge the "M" in the absolute intelligence. Prajna is the cause for the other two viz., Visva and Taijasa. Then realise: "I am the supreme Self, ever free, ever pure, free from all adjuncts."

Having attained self-realisation, having found his bliss in his own Atman, and having forgotten all, the sage or Jivanmukta ever abides in his own effulgent nature, in the bliss of his own Atman, free from all limitation, unfathomable as the ocean without a wave to disturb its surface.

The Lord said, "He who has practised Samadhi, who has completely withdrawn his senses from their objects, who has conquered all enemies such as desire, anger, greed, delusion, fear and inertia, who has vanquished the lower self, who has subdued, by his Bhakti, the Lord of six attributes to such a Yogi I reveal Myself.

"Thus contemplating on his own Self day and night, let the sage abide free from all bonds till his Prarabdha Karma, which gave him this present body, is exhausted. He is absorbed in Me on the dissolution of his body.

"Knowing the cause of the worldly life to be the cause of fear and sorrow in the beginning, middle and end, and having abandoned all that relates to the Karma Kanda, the action portion of the Sastras, let him engage himself in meditating on Me, the inner soul of beings.

"When he realises the unity of his own self with the self of all, he becomes one with My own Self, like the water of the ocean when poured into the ocean becoming the ocean, milk into milk, the ether into ether, the air into air.

"Even though the sage lives in the world for the exhaustion of his Karma he fully realises that the world is false like the appearance of snake in the rope or silver in the mother-of-pearl, of water in the mirage or the appearance of two moons in the sky or the turning of the quarters through the defect of sight.

"So long as one does not behold all as My own Self, let him practise devotion, let him be ever devoted to My worship. I abide for ever in the heart of him who has intense faith and devotion to Me.

"My dear Lakshmana, this essence of all the Vedas, this great mystery has been declared by Me unto thee. The sage who contemplates upon it is freed from his load of impurities that very moment.

"My beloved brother, all this visible world is nothing but Maya. Withdraw thy mind from it. Purify it through meditation on Me alone. Do thou be happy, free from all sorrow and be full of bliss.

"He who meditates on Me with pure mind, thinking of Me as above all attributes or thinks of Me as possessed of the attributes of omniscience, becomes My own Self He purifies all the three worlds by the dust of his feet just as the sun purifies the world by its light.

"This wisdom which is the one essence of all the Vedas, has been thus sung by Me whose glory the Vedanta proclaims. He who reads it with devotion and faith and practises it, attains the final emancipation. He attains to My own form if he has faith in My teachings."

Hari Om Tat Sat!

Om Shanti Shanti Shantil

Section Six

SRI RAMANAVAMI MESSAGES

GLORY OF RAMANAMA

Blessed Immortal Self,

It gives me great pleasure to send you this short message on the celebration of the Ramanavami day.

Lord Rama was the prince of the Ikshvaku race. He was virtuous and of manly strength. He was the Lord of the mind and the senses. Brave and valiant, he was yet gentle and modest. He was a sage in counsel, kind and sweet in speech and most courteous, and handsome in appearance. He was the master of divine weapons, and a great Atiratha. Ever devoted to the good and prosperity of his kingdom, he was a defender of the weak and the protector of Dharma. Endowed with wondrous powers of the mind, he was well versed in all sciences, in the science of arms or Dhanurvidya, as well as in the science of the Self.

Deep and unfathomable like the ocean, firm and steadfast like the Himalayas, valiant like Vishnu, he was the joy of Kausalya. Though fierce like fire on the battle-field, he was calm like the cool breeze of the Mandara Hills, patient like Mother Earth, bounteous like Kubera and righteous like Dharma, the Lord of justice himself. In pains or griefs of his people his heart swiftly sympathised with the sufferer. In the festive scenes which held them in joy, he, like a father shared their joy. By his honour and heroism, as well as by his gentleness and love for his subjects, he endeared himself to the heart of his people. Such a great Lord, Rama was, and his birthday which you are celebrating today, is equally great and auspicious to us all.

The Name of Sri Rama is sweeter than the sweetest objects. It is the haven of peace. It is the very life of pure souls. It is the purifier of all purifying agencies. It quenches the consuming fire of worldly desires. It awakens the knowledge of God which is dormant in our hearts. It bathes the aspirant in the ocean of divine bliss. Glory to Sri Rama and His Name.

Blessed is the pious soul who drinks uninterrupted the nectar of Sri Rama's Name, which has been churned out of the ocean of the Vedas, which removes the impurities of Kali Yuga or the iron age, which lives constantly on the tongue of Lord Siva, which is a sovereign remedy or unfailing specific to cure the disease of worldly existence and is life itself to mother Janaki.

Tulsidas says, "Name is even superior to the Lord because the Aguna and Saguna aspects are tasted and realised by the power of Name. Rama delivered from the curse a single lady, Ahalya, whereas His Name has purified crores of wicked men! Rama gave salvation to, two of his faithful servants, Jatayu and Sabari, but the Name has been the saviour of countless wicked persons."

He further says, "The two sweet fascinating letters RA and MA are like the two eyes of the alphabet and the very life-breath of the devotees. They are easy to remember and delightful to all. They are beneficial in this world and sustain us in the other world." He tells the Sadhaka thus: "Put this jewel-Light of Rama-Nama at the gate of your door-the tongue, if you want to illuminate yourself, both inside and outside.

All the world knows that by uttering the Name even in the opposite way, as 'Mara, Mara' instead of 'Rama, Rama', the great saint Valmiki became Brahman Himself." When such is the glory of the repetition of the Lord's Name in the opposite way, then what to speak of the utterance of the right and proper Name!

The means by which Sri Rama can be reached is to take His Name and to remain saturated in it. Always remain drunk, imbibing the Lord's sweet Name. Let no ideas of purity or impurity enter your mind. There is no unholy object in this world. Should there be any, it becomes the holiest of the holy by contact with the Lord's Name. Illusion, notwithstanding all her efforts, fails to get hold of him who remains deeply absorbed in the Lord's Name and love. Glory to Lord Rama! Adorations to Sri Rama! Prostrations to Sri Rama!

Lord Rama was Maryada Purushottama. He was a Prema Moorti. He was an ideal son, an ideal brother, an ideal husband, an ideal friend and an ideal king. He can be taken to embody all the highest ideals of man. He led an ideal life of a householder to teach humanity. He ruled his people so nicely that his rule came to be called "Rama Rajya," meaning "the rule of righteousness," the rule which bestows on all happiness and prosperity.

May Lord Rama bestow his choicest blessings on you all! May he protect you all and bless you! May you all live drowned in the ocean of divine ecstasy through constant repetition of Lord Rama's Name.

May peace be unto all! May prosperity be unto all! May happiness be unto all! Let us all sing:

Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram, Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram.

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BE DEVOTED TO HARI

Salutations to Lord Rama, who is an Avatara of Vishnu, who is measureless, who is of the nature of pure bliss and intelligence, who is the consort of Sita, master of Sri Hanuman and the Lord of the three worlds, who took His birth of His own will to establish righteousness, destroy the wicked and to protect His devotees.

Rama was the Lord Hari Himself incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravana. He was well-accomplished, beautiful and endowed with royal marks. His glory and of the people. He always addressed the people in gentle words. He never used any harsh words even when somebody addressed Him rudely. He had His sway all over the world.

Devotion to Sri Rama confers immortality and bliss. Therefore recite His Name, sing His glory, serve His feet. Enthrone in your heart Sri Rama of dark hue, whose image is reflected in the heart of Lord Siva.

I shall tell you the means of attaining the final release from the great cycle of births and deaths. Devotion to Vishnu is a great purifier of the heart. From devotion arises knowledge. From knowledge comes the realisation of the pure Self. Knowing this perfectly one goes to the supreme abode and merges in the supreme Self.

Do thou, therefore worship Vishnu, who is Lord Rama, who is the consort of Sita, who is Lakshmi. Abandon all foolishness and enmity. Do thou serve Rama.

Without developing devotion to Rama, who is the supreme Self, who lives in the heart of all beings, who is all bliss, who is secondless, how can man cross the ocean of worldly life which has sorrow, pain and misery for its wages?

Even a great sinner who is endowed with evil qualities, who is fond of other people's wealth and belongings, if he always remembers Sri Rama, he is freed from all kinds of faults that pertain to this worldly life. He attains purity and goes to the pure abode of Vishnu.

Devotion has nothing to do with age, caste, position, creed, rank or sex. Generally the worldly-minded people say, "We will practise Dhyana, devotion, etc., when we retire from service." This is a serious mistake. How can you do spiritual Sadhana after squeezing all your energy in service? How can you practise the strict means of Yogic discipline in old age? Is there any certainty of life?

The spiritual seeds of devotion must be sown in your heart when you are young, when your heart is tender and untainted. Then only will they strike a deep root, blossom and bear fruit. When you become old, when you retire from service you will not be able to do vigorous Sadhana. When you start young, you will not be afraid of the god of death, Yama. You will meet him with a smile.

Time is fleeting. Know the value of time. Time is the most precious thing. Utilise every second profitably. Do not procrastinate. Abandon all idle gossiping. Forget the past. Live every moment of your life for the realisation of the ideal and goal. Unfold all latent faculties. Grow, evolve and become a superhuman or a dynamic Yogi. You must struggle hard and reach the goal of life.

May you all attain the final beatitude of life through intense devotion to Sri Rama! May you live immersed in the ecstasy of divine love and Suddha Prem! May Sri Rama, who is effulgent like a million suns, who is adored by the gods and devotees protect you all! May the grace and blessings of Lord Rama be upon you all!

1947

WAY TO RAMA RAJYA

Blessed Immortal Selves!

Out of the fullness of my heart and love for you all I send a Message Divine to inspire you, to instantly elevate and to transform your life. It will transport you from weakness to tremendous strength, from failure to flaming success, from sorrow to blessedness and joy. Hearken, therefore, with utmost attention to this message of Ramanavami.

The most sacred Ramayana abounds with innumerable life-redeeming lessons. But in receiving a message, the receiver eagerly looks for something therein which will throw light upon and guide him in the most pressing problems of the day. He seeks solutions for the crying questions of the moment. And at the present and the one matter that is terribly agitating all minde and hearts is the wide-spread Adharma-falsehood and passion, that is rampant everywhere in the world. To know the cause of it and

the direct way to quickly remove it is the thing needed now. And to this end, out of the countless lessons teeming in the Ramayana, I wish to awaken you all to the most important and timely ones for humanity now. All the main ills of the modern world will be removed if these two lessons from the ideal life of Rama are adopted in our lives individually as well as nationally.

Amongst numerous lessons I wish this day to particularly impress upon you two lessons. They are the special need of the world today. Humanity has become corrupt today due to the falling away from two essential ideals indispensable to the weal and happiness of life, individual, national as also international. They are the ideals of Truth and Purity. Let these twin flames of Truth and Purity burn bright upon your broad bosom.

At the present moment you have excommunicated ethics and murdered morality in the name of modernism. Fraud and falsehood have acquired the status of fashionable fine-arts. People make out a polished pretence of purity and truth but there remains just a travesty. Fraud flourishes in all the four quarters of the globe. Politics has degenerated into a mere game of fraud. Broken pledges, discarded promises, dishonoured contracts once solemnly made, hypocritical avowals and assertions, and deliberately misleading and falsified statements-these are the kind that you meet with everywhere you turn.

Enter a house, talk to the family therein and enquire about its affairs; then this will be the story you will hear. Analyse the internal affairs of a nation; then too the same story greets your ears. And behold the state of international affairs in this world; once again a similar tale you hear.

Therefore I emphasise upon these two great ideals -the sublime ideal of Purity and the lofty ideal of Truth. Rama was the embodiment of both. The entire Ramayana was the outcome of his burning desire to uphold the promise of his father made to Kaikeyi, the queen. An illustrious prince, Sri Rama voluntarily subjected himself to untold hardships for fourteen years of forest life amidst fierce beasts and Asuras just to keep up a promise, and that too, a promise not made or given by him but by another even before he was born. What an ideal of highest purity is his life-long vow of Eka Patnivrata. How dire is the need now of adopting this ideal in life when the solemn contract of sacred matrimony and its sanctity are outraged and scandalised all over the world.

Ramayana is permeated with the spirit of these two ideals. Dasaratha sticks to truth even though it costs him his very life. Grief breaks his heart and shatters his body to death, yet the word to Kaikeyi is kept. Then, take Sri Rama. He loves Bharata more than his life-breath-yet, having given his word to his step-mother, not even the most poignant entreaty of the beloved Bharata could make him deviate an inch from his resolve. What a proof of the strength of truth. In every man's heart should ring today the grand and most memorable declaration of Rama: "Fire may abandon its heat, ice its coolness, jasmine its fragrance, but I never break the promise made to my father." Rama's own mother, Queen Kausalya, tries her utmost to dissuade him. She tells him how the mother is even greater than the father, for, has it not been said, first and foremost: "Matru Devo Bhava"-let thy mother be like a god unto thee. But no, truth is indeed the supremest God of all gods.

Remember again the heroic adherence to truth that Prince Bharata exemplifies with grand, superhuman resolution for fourteen tedious years. Bharata stuck to his lofty vow and to the little village of Nandigram, bowing with folded hands and bent head before the royal sandals of Lord Rama. And at the end of the period, had but Rama delayed a moment more, then true to his word, Bharata would have

cast himself into the burning pit of a blazing fire. Such is the stuff of Truth-Truth that makes man immortal. And this precious human body is given to thee to strive to attain immortality. Therefore, blessed selves, embrace this Truth and inherit the life immortal.

Then comes the marvellous fidelity of Sita in the grove of the Asokavana. What unforgettable adherence to the vow once taken. What adamantine steadiness in the midst of the severest trials and temptations. How Ravana tempted Sita; how he tries to convince her that Rama is dead even by producing an exact likeness of his severed head before the shocked and agonised gaze of Sita. But all through this we note the unwavering constancy of Sita. She was Truth personified. For what is Pativrata if not being absolutely true to one's chosen lord. And such truth is indeed of the very form of the highest Purity.

Therefore, blessed selves, men and women, young and old, great and small, O ye Adhyatmic warriors, all take up this trident of Truth with its threefold prongs of truthful thought, speech and deed! Deal the death-blow to all untruth and falsehood with this invincible weapon of Truth. This is the Mahastra, the real Rama-bana that I give unto you today. With deep reverence and determined resoluteness wield this Satyastra, slay the enemies of Santi and Sukha and see the dawn of Satya-Yuga.

On this most auspicious and joyous Sri Ramanavami Day this, therefore, is the message I send to you; this the present I give to you, this the promise I ask of you let these two-Truth and Purity-be the mottos of your life. Let these principles animate every moment of your existence, motivate each action of yours, dwell in your heart, fill your mind, pervade your speech. Let Truth and Purity light up your career, guide your conduct and mould your character. Let these twin forces sweep away all inauspiciousness and evil for ever from your life. Banished will be the black night of sorrow and suffering and before their divine blaze will vanish the shadows of vice and of unrighteousness.

And on this great-Sri Ramanavami Day-I shall tell you a great secret. In bestowing the present of the invincible weapon of Truth and Purity I shall reveal one thing, the only thing which is equally powerful and marvellous as the Mahastra. This is the Divine Name of Rama. Rama-Nama and Rama-Bana of Truth and Purity are a marvellous pair. He who has the one has the other also. Repeat Rama-Nama. Stick to Truth. Practise Purity. These three will raise you to transcendent perfection.

Hear, O beloved self! Thy body is a living temple of the Divine. Enshrine then the deity of Truth in the sanctum of the heart. Let each person be a veritable Pagoda of Purity, housing this Presence Divine.

The advent of "Rama Rajya" verily implies the ushering in of prosperity and plenty, blessedness, bliss and peace on earth and goodwill among men. If such a state of true happiness is to come about then all fear and uncertainty must vanish from man's heart. But fear will persist as long as there exist suspicion, distrust and disbelief amongst men. To eliminate distrust and suspicion, all falsehood, deception, crookedness and untruth must go. Then alone mutual trust and love will spring up between man and man. Truth alone can do this. The power of truth is that power which has made the memorable name of Harishchandra forever immortal and renowned, the power that will vanquish and exterminate falsehood and untruth from this fair earth of ours,

There is no doubt, if these principles are immediately adopted, sincerely cherished and earnestly practised real "Rama Rajya" will come about on earth not merely for one kingdom, nation or country, but for the whole world. It will be "Rama Rajya" for the entire humanity.

Such periodical celebrations are a boon and blessing to you. They serve to keep bright and alive these lofty examples by following which life on earth becomes fruitful. Attend the celebrations with the right and proper Bhava and benefit fully by it. Resolve from this Ramanavami day to take a daily dip into the life-redeeming waters that the Ramayana is. Read a small portion of the Ramayana everyday. You will be constantly inspired. You derive valuable guidance in your day-to-day life. You will, without fail, imbibe into your being the lofty qualities embodied therein. Within a short time you will surely find yourself a different man, greatly filled with Sattva, with the divine spirit of Truth and Purity. Peace, joy and prosperity will be yours here and hereafter.

1948

LORD RAMA-LIGHT OF TRUTH

Sri Rama was Maryada Purushottama, the Lord who obeyed the relative formal instructions and played the part of the ideal of a perfected human being. He was the most ethical, the "good" man of the world. The Ramayana of Valmiki is the wonderful history of the glorious life of the memorable king, Ramachandra, who typified in himself the zenith of the way of living the highest virtues that open the eye of the soul. The essence of divine existence manifests those of its superphysical characteristics as are necessitated to usher up the individuals living in a particular condition of being to a higher state of conscious life. The incarnation of an age is the product of the collective totality of the forces of the spirit of humanity inhabiting the earth during the time. The ideal of ethical and moral perfection embodied in the person of Rama was the power required to correct the disturbances of the time. Right living is the precursor of divine illumination and the Avatara of Rama was the background of the transcendental expression in the succeeding Avatara of Krishna. The Avataras of God are the illustrations of the forward march and the upward ascent of the soul towards completeness and immensity.

Rama's incarnation was the seventh in the course of the progressive manifestation of Vishnu, the positive Light of Sattva and Truth. The seventh stage marked the human degree of the illumination of eternal consciousness. Thus Rama symbolises the beginning of the blossoming of divine consciousness, potentially existent in the human being. He, therefore, is the exemplary personality whose footprints the man of the world has to follow if he is to succeed in his spiritual quest. Rama was not a man of precept but of practice. He possessed the key to the door of the kingdom of reality, blessedness and peace. Selflessness, straightforwardness, broad-heartedness and a life dedicated to the cause of justice and eternal law have made Rama endear himself to one and all. Valmiki says that the voice of the Ramayana will be echoed on earth as long as the sun and the moon last, mountains stand and the rivers flow. The austere life of the divine Rama has immortalised His hallowed Name and devotees regard it as the essence of the Mantras of Vishnu and Siva, 'Ra' and 'Ma' being the essential letters of the two. Glory to Rama-Nama!

Lord Rama was born on the Navami Tithi when five planets were in their most exalted houses of the Zodiac. It was an epoch-making time in the history of the whole world. Brihaspati, the god of Wisdom, was in the first house. Divinity was blooming in the child. Vasishtha initiated Him as "Rama," the joy and the seat of the illumined devotees.

The life of Rama was one extending to a thousand years. His art of government was the expression of the spiritual law of truth, knowledge and infinity. Not even a dog escaped the notice of the Emperor Ramal The complaint of the animal was heard and the guilty man, a Brahmin, was accordingly banished from His kingdom. He spared none from the iron rule of Dharma, not even His faithful brother, not even His devout wife! He blessed the squirrel but punished even the lord of the ocean. “Truth alone triumphs” was illustrated by the deeds of Rama. His example is meant for all ages.

The Dharma of all Dharmas is the spiritual expansion of the self. All ethics form but auxiliaries to this natural and essential fact. Lord Rama threw a light on this truth through the torch of His own life, and all lovers of Truth are the lovers and worshippers of Rama, the supreme divinity expressed in the relative land of Dharma.

1949

RAMA RAJYA WITHIN

Salutations to Lord Rama, the Supreme Being who incarnated Himself upon this earth to lead humanity on the right path for all ages to come! Salutations to Mother Sita, the Pativrata-Siromani, whose very remembrance bestows Moksha on all!

Think of Lord Rama, and your entire being is pervaded by a thrill of joy and peace-the joy and peace that belongs to Rama Rajya. Forget not that Lord Rama who took the human form out of mere play and in order to place before man an ideal of human perfection, was in reality the Supreme Brahman Himself.

Whatever be your attitude towards the Lord, if you think of Him and Him alone intensely, Moksha is certain. Narada states this fact very clearly in his Bhakti Sutras. Even Vaira-Bhakti, where intense hatred for the Lord is produced, but (and this is an all-important factor) the mind is pervaded by the thought of the Lord (Tanmayata), so fully that the Bhakta sees the Lord alone everywhere, leads one to His lotus-feet. What to say of intense loving devotion to His feet! No doubt about it; it leads one to eternal bliss and supreme peace.

Establish the Rama Rajya in yourself; when each individual thus converts himself into a walking, talking and moving Rama Rajya, then the entire world will be converted into one huge Rama Rajya.

The essentials of Rama Rajya have been wonderfully laid before you in the Ramayana. Truth, purity, an indomitable will to conquer evil, an unshakable faith in and adherence to Dharma, obedience, forbearance, sympathy and love-these constitute Lord Rama. With the birth of these in you, be sure Lord Rama has enthroned Himself in your heart. Ramayana is replete with lessons which every aspirant should learn and assimilate.

Who can guage even by thought Bharata’s devotion to the Lord’s lotus-feet and Lakshmana’s vigilant service? Hanuman and Lakshmana should be your ideals of service. Utter selflessness and total dedication to the Lord and thenceforward carrying out His will as an instrument in His hands-that is the secret of success through work. Body, mind and soul, are all laid at His feet; friends, family, nay, the entire world dwindles into an airy nothing before Him. It is then that you enjoy supreme felicity. You become an Aptakama; you have obtained whatever there is to be obtained. No more are you assailed by

wants and desires. Fear, cowardice and other evils which have their root in greed disappear. You can work wonders.

Every woman should get before herself the ideal of Sita to perfection. Pativrata Dharma is the only Dharma for a woman. She need not perform austerities or observe other Vratas. She need not practise Yoga or engage herself in Upasana. If a woman sticks to this one Pativrata Dharma she gets Mukti easily. Her might then becomes unchallengeable. Even gods will bow to her, and the elements will obey her commands. O fashionable woman, O immodest lady, turn away from the path which leads to ruin; follow Sita's example. You will be ever remembered, even as Sita is.

Rama Rajya was based on truth. Dharma was its foundation. Sastras were the guiding principles. Rishis, Yogis, Munis and Brahma Jnanis were the guiding lights. The Vedas were always respected and followed. Therefore, Rama Rajya endured and prospered. And, it is even now spoken of as the most perfect form of government. Here is a lesson for all the rulers of the world. If you base your government on true religion, on Dharma and on eternal verities, the government will be an ideal one, and all your subjects will enjoy peace and prosperity; if you build it on shifting sands of materialism, then the structure will collapse, destroying the inhabitants. Learn a good lesson from the Ramayana. Abandon the path that your perverted intellect impels you to tread.

May the blessings of Lord Rama be upon you all!

1950

LET SRI RAMA BE YOUR IDEAL

Ideals are remembered and adored for the purpose of adopting them in your life. The Ramanavami celebration or the Vasanta Navaratri every year is an opportune moment for us to saturate ourselves in the spirit of Sri Rama. We love and adore the ideals because we express thereby our yearning to unite with them. In our worship of God it is implied that we should be virtuous, good and perfect, even as God is. Sri Rama said, "To anyone who once takes shelter under Me and solicits, I am Thine', I shall give fearlessness from all beings; this is My vow." One cannot be a devout worshipper of the qualities of Sri Rama if compassion, gentleness, justice and sagacity are not found in such a person. Worship of Sri Rama means resorting to truthfulness, saintliness and divinity.

Rama's rule was one of the law of unsurpassed rectitude which does not pay heed to personal relationships of a brother or a wife. Truth has an iron hand. It establishes impartial oneness of vision. One who approaches Sri Rama with love becomes wide in heart, pure in spirit, good in nature, dispassionate in thought, speech and action. A true devotee of Sri Rama is His representative, His power and knowledge. The Name of Rama burns ignorance, passion and sin. With knowledge, correctly or incorrectly, when the word "Rama" is pronounced, it showers a rain of good on the devotee. "Sri Rama Brahma Tarakam"-Sri Rama is Brahman who takes one across Samsara. Rama is one in whom Yogins sport (Ramante) i.e., in the Self within. Rama-Nama is the essence of Sahasranama. Once you take refuge in Him your welfare becomes His responsibility.

To a devotee, Rama is not simply a good and great person, but God Himself. Rama was the son of King Dasaratha, as well as the divine, omnipresent God, Self, Atman or Brahman. The destruction of the ten-headed Ravana by Rama is the annihilation of the mind with the ten senses. Worship of Rama is the worship of the Virat Purusha Himself. Read the prayers offered by Mandodari and Brahma in the Yuddha Kanda of the Valmiki Ramayana. They refer to Rama as the one sole creator of the universe, the God of all, the ruler of all. "Tattvato Jnatva"-after knowing Him in truth one enters into Him.

Devotion to God is not a simple emotion. It is the result of intense Vairagya and Sattvika Bhava. You should possess the good qualities extolled in the Ramayana. Otherwise emotion may raise you up temporarily to a kind of ecstasy, but you cannot experience divine consciousness thereby. Devotion is the fruit which ripens gradually through the process of self-restraint and virtue. There is no Sadhana for Bhagavat Sakshatkara without intense Vairagya. Only after detachment from the world of things, is it at all possible to have attainment of God. Restrain the senses, Do not allow the mind to think of pleasure-centres. Try to bear heat and cold, hunger and thirst, when they torment you. Remember God, and forget all pains. Remember, this world is Asukham and Anityam. Know that the Lord, Sri Rama, fills this universe with His presence. Let Sri Ramanavami be the inauguration of greater and more persevering effort for realisation and absolute perfection. Forget the past as a shadow and do not dream about the future. Rely on God; surrender yourself unto Him, here and now. He will lift you up with His saving hands. You will, thereby, achieve the Purushartha; you will be supremely blessed.

May the ever-flowing grace of Sri Ramachandra, the Paramatman, be upon you all!

1951

SRI RAMA, THE UNIVERSAL IDEAL

Beloved Aspirants!

May the grace of Sri Ramachandra be upon you all! Sri Rama, the ideal of goodness, mercy, benevolence and divine life on earth, revealed himself for destroying the forces of Adharma, for protecting and establishing Dharma, for living personally the canons of Dharma and thus becoming to all mankind the example par excellence of a perfect life. The Ramayana, the celebrated history of Sri Rama, enumerates in its very first chapter, called the Moola-Ramayana, the glorious characteristics of Sri Ramachandra who is declared by such an eminent 'sage like Narada as the crest-jewel among persons. Rama's Name, form and conduct have all been the objects of constant remembrance, contemplation and emulation for people since ages. The word "Rama" is interpreted in the Ramarahasyopanishad as the combination of the essence of the Narayana-Ashta- Akshara and the Siva-Pancha-Akshara, i.e., 'RA' and MA', without which the Ashtakshara and the Panchakshara not only do not give their proper meaning but give the opposite meaning. Rama-Nama is also considered as the essence of the thousand Names of the Lord. It is the Taraka Mantra, the vessel which takes the mortal across the ocean of Samsara or death. The power of the Name is well realised when it is known that even the incorrect pronunciation thereof turned the rogue Ratnakara into sage Valmiki. Sri Rama is an object of meditation as He is the Avatara of Lord Vishnu, the preserver of the universe.

Sri Rama incarnated himself at a time when five of the planets were in their exaltation. This unique planetary condition is suggestive of the glory of the life of Sri Rama. Dharma found in him its best refuge. Read the Ramayana, and you will realise the greatness of Sri Rama, the true Arya Purusha, the ideal son, the ideal brother, the ideal husband, the ideal king. Human life, as a whole, in its different aspects of social relationship, all firmly grounded in Dharma, was lived in the most practical manner and illustrated to all by the well adjusted personality and the highly refined conduct of Sri Rama. An ideal life can be lived on earth by following the guide of this glorious leader of mankind, the veritable representative of the highest divinity manifested for the benefaction of all succeeding generations.

The devotees of Sri Rama actually live the divine life, for they practise and spread the virtues that adorned the person of Sri Rama. The devotee rises above himself and attunes his mind to the Lord. The descent of the grace from his beloved One entirely transforms him, and the devotee becomes the living, visible symbol of the transcendent, invisible Rama. God is the heart of the devotee and the devotee is the heart of God. God speaks to man through His devotee. A Bhagavad Bhakta is a purifier of the world he inhabits.

Let your relationship with Rama be more familiar, stronger and purer. Let it be free from desires of all kinds. Pray, not for obtaining anything in the world, but for reaching Rama. It is Rama that you want, and nothing else. Is not the Master of the universe greater than the universe? Love Him. To attain Him is to become perfect and immortal.

Do Japa of Rama-Nama. See Rama in all beings. Serve Him in all. Let your motive be absolutely unselfish and pure. Worship Sri Rama with sixteen Upacharas daily. Study the scriptures describing His glories. Intensify your Prem for the Lord. Remember at all times that He is your final goal. Remember that Rama is the infinite Being residing in the innermost recess of everyone. Rama is Sakshat Sriman Narayana Himself. He is the supreme Purushottama. He is the sovereign of the universe. He knows all and controls all as the Antaryamin. Let your heart be surrendered to Him. Pray to Him unceasingly. He will absolve you from your sins and free you of your defects and confer upon you the bliss of the Supreme.

May the blessings of Sri Rama be ever with you!

1955

FOLLOW THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The noblest lesson in the Ramayana is the supreme importance of righteousness in the life of every human being. Righteousness is the spiritual spark of life. Cultivation of righteousness is the process of the unfoldment of the latent divinity in man. The glorious incarnation of the supreme Truth, Sri Ramachandra, has exemplified through His own life how to follow the path of righteousness. Let mankind follow in His footsteps and practise the ideals cherished by Him, for it is only thus can there be everlasting peace, prosperity and welfare in this world.

No one but the righteous can be truly happy. No one but he who has the correct sense of duty and the will for its implementation can be said to live worthily. One must be imbued with a definite conviction about the supremacy of moral principles, ethical values and spiritual ideals, which should guide one's

day-to-day actions and serve as powerful means for the culture of the human personality. That is the purpose of life. That is the way to Self-realisation.

Do that which promotes harmony, goodwill and peace, and do not do that which inspires a contrary effect. Do that which is universally considered to be good, just and proper, that which is bound to produce positive effects, and do not do that which will bring negative results. This is the yard-stick of judgment. This is how you could decide between right and wrong.

Blessed aspirants, swerve not from the path of truth. Do not be negligent in following the path of Dharma. Let not material consideration outweigh spiritual values. Let not personal gains overstep general good. Allow not selfishness to rule your conduct. Permit not the dictates of the senses to over-rule the judgment reason and wisdom. Of

First consider the welfare of others, and last of all your own. Look into your own character and conduct. Read your own heart. Find out whether your thought, speech and action are in accordance with the principles of Dharma. Discipline the body, mind and senses. Enlighten yourself with useful, spiritual knowledge. Eradicate slowly all evil thoughts, evil speech and evil habits and cultivate pure thoughts, correct speech and good habits.

Eliminate that which produces a negative reaction in others and strengthen that which is quick to generate a sense of well-being within you and others too. But do not be carried away by the exhilaration of doing good and being good. It is nothing special that is expected of you. It is your duty.

The only way you can make tomorrow a better day is to think and do today that which would be conducive to make a better tomorrow. Have an open heart and mind, but accept only that which is good, proper and worthy of remembrance. At least one good action everyday; let this be your motto.

What you dislike in others, take care to correct in yourself first. Accept only what is good in others and ignore the rest. Your own happiness depends on how you conduct yourself. Do not complain about circumstances. Try to make the best of everything.

Spiritual seekers, reflect, cogitate, analyse and ratiocinate what should be aspired for and what should not be, what ought to be done and what to be abstained from. Meditate on the Lord. Pray to Him for light and guidance. Sing His holy Name. Think rightly. Speak gently, truthfully and act honestly, justly and selflessly. Thus grow and evolve and improve yourself everyday; every moment.

May the grace of Sri Ramachandra be upon all!

1957

THE HERO OF THE RAMAYANA

Lord Rama, the hero of the Ramayana is the Purushavatara of the Almighty Being who incarnated Himself as the son of King Dasaratha of Ayodhya. He was the joy of his mother Kausalya and the very life of Dasaratha. True to the Purushavatara of the Lord, Sri Rama's qualities of heart and head exemplified in themselves the height of human perfection which man can attain in life. He was of an iron frame of body. His heart was tender and endearing. His mind was flexible. Even as a boy he achieved so much skill

in archery that there was none to equal him in the wielding of arrows with lightning quickness and unfailing aim. It testifies to the statement of Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita: "Ramah Sastrabhritamaham-1 am Sri Rama in the wielder of arrows," while explaining His countless aspects to Arjuna, the Pandava prince. Though born and brought up in an atmosphere of pleasure and plenty befitting his royal heritage, he cultivated such simplicity and Vairagya bespeaking his philosophic bent of mind and detachment to the fleeting objects of the world. He was a "Jitendriya," in every sense expressive of a resolved mind and senses brought under perfect control. Nevertheless he had a heart to feel for others in their sufferings and miseries and did everything in alleviating their distress. The teachings of the Upanishads: "Matri Devo Bhava, Pitri Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava and Atithi Devo Bhava" were translated by Sri Rama in his life in an abundant manner with regard to his duty to parents, deep devotion to Guru and hospitality and kindness to those who were in need.

Mark his fearlessness-as a boy of fifteen he accompanied sage Visvamitra to the forest. He showed great courage in killing the two Rakshasas, Maricha and Subahu for the sole purpose of protecting Dharma. Mark his chivalry in the court of King Janaka in lifting the bow and breaking it as the wager for receiving the hand of Sita in marriage.

Cultivate the qualities of selflessness and sacrifice he displayed in carrying out the wishes of his step-mother Kaikeyi by renouncing the kingdom and going to the forest in exile for fourteen years without the least feeling of offence or ill-will against anybody, much less Kaikeyi herself. The glory of renunciation: "Tyagenaike Amritatvamanasuh" as declared in the Upanishads is implied in this one act of Sri Rama.

Watch again Sri Rama's equal vision in respect of friends and foes when he gave shelter to Vibhishana, knowing fully well that the latter had come to him from Ravana, king of Lanka and his bitter enemy and thus establishing his "Saranagata Vatsalatva"-quality of giving shelter to those who take refuge in him.

See his true friendship in redeeming his promise to Sugriva, the monkey-chief, in installing him as the king of Kishkindha after killing his brother Vali and that too when he himself was in hot-waters, thus maintaining the presence of mind even in adverse circumstances.

Observe his cosmic love when he performed the last rites to Jatayu-the king of birds-who died of the wounds he sustained from the sword of Ravana while trying to rescue Sita from the demon-king, a fact which is indicative of Rama's feeling for the oneness of all souls.

Mark his kindness and magnanimity in giving time of three days to Ravana in the battle-field asking him to resolve himself by giving back Sita even at that moment, thus showing his willingness to forget and forgive all that is past.

Lastly see his detached feelings even towards Sita for whose sake he underwent ever so many trials and tribulations in life. When the coronation was over after his successful return from Lanka, he discovered his beloved wife unable to stand public criticisms and scandals, not because of his non-confidence in her chastity, but simply because of the ideal in the interest of larger issues.

Such was the glory of Sri Rama, the light of the Ikshvaku race. May God bless mankind to imbibe the virtues of Sri Rama and to put them into practice in their own life particularly in this iron age when Dharma has receded to the background.

1958

THE IDEAL OF HIGHEST DUTY

Salutations to the mighty warrior Raghuvir, the great prince of Raghu race who embodies in Himself all the admirable virtues and talents in their perfection! Hail to Lord Rama, the incarnate Divinity, the saviour of the afflicted souls who take refuge in Him!

Lord Rama is the supreme ideal of the man of Dharma, dutifulness and discipline. He shone more with the adornment of virtue than with royal raiment. His grand personality and His flawless life of supreme dignity, humanity and rectitude are a perennial inspiration to mankind for all times. Rama's reign has become immortal as the welfare state par excellence based upon ethical conduct of life. The secret of the glory of Rama's rule is the conception of duty that held sway over all other factors. The people of the time, from the highest, the monarch Rama, down to the humblest and the lowest and the least of the citizens were governed by their sense of duty in every walk of life, private as well as public. The Ramayana is permeated with this unique spirit. More than anything else this earnest urge to fulfil one's moral obligations and do one's duty at any cost in the interest of Dharma and human welfare inspired each one of the main personalities in this divine drama of Rama Lila that was witnessed in the golden age of the solar dynasty, Raghuvamsa.

Man today speaks of the rule of law. In Rama Rajya the rule of duty prevailed. This rule of duty governed even the personal life of Ramachandra. This is the need of all the world today, the need to turn your attention more and more towards what you have to do unto others than what others have to do for you. What is your duty, and not what is due to you, should be your prime concern in life. Human relations were regulated by the feelings of duty and obligation and not by the emphasis on rights and privileges. The former made the latter unnecessary. Duty calls for sacrifice. Sacrifice is possible through selflessness. Selflessness springs forth from love for others. Such love arises in pure hearts. Purity of life is the greatest treasure. It is the root and fountain-source of human welfare and peace and progress. A pure life is a rich mine of untold blessings. Dharma and devotion to God form the basis and the source of a pure life. The fulfilment of Dharma purifies your heart. Worship of God is the supreme purifier and destroys the defects of mental and moral imperfections of man. Thus through a life of faith, devotion and Dharma grow thou into an ideal man. Sow the seeds of permanent human welfare and supreme dutifulness. Usher in the Rama Rajya of truth, love and service unto mankind. This is the silent spiritual message, the unvoiced yet powerful message of Rama's life and reign. This is the immortal and the eternal, living message of Ramanavami, the sacred day that commemorates this Divine Superman of holy Ayodhya by Sarayu stream.

As defender of the faith and the protector of holy men, the lofty sense of duty of Dasaratha makes him set aside all consideration and send the two young princes Rama and Lakshmana to safeguard the Yajna of the Rishis in the Dandakaranya. Queen Sumitra's reaction to Lakshmana's decision to follow Rama to the forest is full of this glorious conception of the highest duty. Self-forgetting, she declares, "O my son, Lakshmana, regard Rama as thy father Dasaratha, Janaki as myself (thy mother) and the forest as Ayodhya city. Go my son, happily into the forest."

And what did Lord Rama do? He set aside his obligations to his fond mother, his brothers and loving citizens of Ayodhya. Rama felt at that moment that the highest duty of a son was to uphold the honour of His father in the name of Truth and the cause of Dharma. His loyalty to this ideal was whole-souled and unswerving. The divine Prince turned his face away from the pleasures of the royal palace and throne and chose the perils and hardships of the forest. For He chose the path of duty, i.e., to answer the call of the highest duty. Right up to the very last of the divine drama we find this lofty note of duty and self-sacrifice. Rather than offend the conception of rectitude and virtue of the least among His subjects, the great king chose to inflict upon Himself deepest anguish and put the gentle Sita through the agonizing ordeal of separation and desolation in the jungles.

Did not Lakshmana have a duty towards the noble Sita? Surely he had and he knew it too. But most painfully he saw the higher duty of obeying the elder brother and carrying out the behests of the king and ruler whom he knew to be the embodiment of virtue and Dharma. The grandest and the most poignant manifestation of this great ideal of Ramayana is the self-offering of the immortal Jatayu upon the altar of supreme duty. He was in an ill-matched combat with the powerful Ravana. Jatayu might have very well avoided the conflict. He had nothing to do with Sita. He was bound by no particular obligation. But Jatayu was sprung from the soil of Bharatavarsha, from the depth of whose mother-heart arises the glorious dictum “Paropakarartham Idam Sareeram-this body is verily meant for helping others”. The noble and valiant Jatayu responded to the unspoken call of this highest duty of man-the duty to help others, to serve others, to check Adharma and to succour those in distress.

This is true living. This is heroic living. Let faith fill thee with strength to live such a life of adherence to the highest duty. Let the Name of the Lord give you the power of self-sacrifice in the cause of highest Dharma. May the glorious example of the Ramayana ideal inspire you all with soul-force to lead a Divine Life of self-denial, sacrifice and service unto all! Be bold in Dharma and duty. Worship the ideal Rama. Become like Him through one-pointed devotion unto Him. May His Divine Grace elevate you through Paropakara to the Parama-Dharma of highest Kaivalya Moksha! Om Sri Ramaya Namah!

1959

LESSON OF RAMAYANA

If anything justifies life, it is the law of righteousness. Righteousness is not merely something of a moral code; it is the basic principle which upholds the purpose of life, fulfils one’s responsibility as a unit of society, affirms the dignity of the human being and man’s dedication to the ideals of truth and justice, uplifting him from all that is vulgar and mean, evil and inequitable.

The lesson of the Ramayana is a perfect ideal for all. Simple yet glorious, common-place yet rarely followed, fundamentally human yet spiritually transmutative, it is an ideal which has decisively influenced the design of the fabric of Hindu society and has ever been an inspiring example for emulation to everyone that owed allegiance to it.

Colourful Panorama

In a colourful panorama of hope and despair, sacred idealism and mundane trickery, self-sacrifice and desolation, onslaught of wickedness and tragedy, magnanimous dedication to virtue and self-effacing devotion, steadfastness and fortitude, triumph over evil and glory of victory, but immediately, alas, to be embittered by the harsh and suspicious outlook of a vain world, and finally, the agonizing decision of an ideal king to sacrifice the foremost object of his love and personal happiness for the sake of public opinion and meeting a cruelly rigid standard set for the throne by his beloved subjects to whom his allegiance was first and foremost, all these unfold in the Ramayana with a superb grandeur.

No one but a god could have lived up to this ideal of human perfection. Nowhere but in a highly civilized society could such a poignant drama have been enacted, symbolising at its best the war between good and evil, right and wrong, self-abnegation and covetousness, righteousness and selfish consideration.

Dedicated Righteousness

In a remote age (possibly around 1000 to 1200 B.C.), when despotism and lust for power were the rules of the day everywhere, we find that a great, ageing king electing to die of a broken heart in order to uphold a promise, necessitating him to banish his most beloved son and depriving him of the right of succession, rather than try to justify its negation or withdraw from it for personal preference or sentiment. That a promise once given, however ambiguous its scope or wide its range of application, whether given in a weak moment or out of mature deliberation, has got to be fulfilled, irrespective of its consequences and cost, is pathetically exemplified in the case of Dasaratha, and gloriously so in the case of Sri Rama whose magnificent sense of values, upholding self-sacrifice, has ever been the ideal of humanity.

Symbolic Personalities

Almost everyone of the personalities in the Ramayana has a lesson to teach. Sita symbolises the ideal wife and Lakshmana the ideal brother, and so also Bharata who rises above his mother's worldly sense of values, does not succumb to the lure of throne and power, tries his level best to bring Sri Rama, and failing which, elects to run the caretaker government as an agent of Rama's 'Paduka' (sandals). Sita foregoes the comforts of the palace so that she may share the fate of her husband as a dutiful wife, however harsh the hardship. Likewise, Lakshmana also renounces his princely life so that he may be able to serve his brother in the wilderness of banishment. And there is Hanuman, the symbol of ideal discipleship (Dasya-Bhakti), with perfect devotion and self-effacing service to the master.

Ravana, a non-Aryan king, carries away the beautiful Aryan princess Sita. But, unlike the case of Paris and Helen, we have a striking example of social ethics here. A fact generally overlooked with regard to Ravana is that, in spite of his despotism and lust he preserves the honour of Sita, treats her with respect, and, though he causes her to be cajoled and threatened, he does not lose his head, but obeys the law for captives. Sita, on her part, exemplifies the finest ideal of womanhood. To her, chastity is dearer than life itself. To her, nothing indeed exists except the memory of her husband. The lure of fabulous riches has no place in her pure mind.

Perfect Man

Then we have the example of the perfect human being "Maryada Purushottama," in Sri Rama. In devotion to truth and righteousness he is unparalleled. His sense of duty is superb. As a prince, as a husband, as a brother, as a man, as a king, as a master he is without parallel. He reacts in a human way

to the loss of Sita. His idealism, his strength of will and self-sacrifice, his dour determination, fortitude and leadership are magnificent; and yet, the spring of love and affection did not dry up in his heart. He did not seek solace in the philosophy of the evanescence of the world; he did not turn a renunciate; he did not become immune to his very human despondence. His duty to Sita was expected of him as a husband. It was to search for her, locate her and rescue her, if necessary by raising an army and waging war which he did. It was the duty of a Kshatriya for the vindication of his honour.

Right Perspective

Thus we find throughout the Ramayana myriads of examples which fit into every pattern of life. Some of them are explicitly simple and would find a place in every book of moral law and some others are yet somewhat open to question, as for example, the killing of Vali which has got to be interpreted either in a spiritual way, that, when a devotee seeks refuge in the Lord and asks for His help, the Lord cannot refrain from giving it; and also that it was preordained that Vali should attain liberation thus; or otherwise, in a temporal way, that is, by justifying the action as a matter of expedience. Whatever be the interpretations, one should never forget that the Ramayana is a human epic, and is replete with glorious morals for emulation such as those that are universally acceptable and applicable. One should accept them in all humility, with commonsense and sober evaluation. It is only those that are perfunctory about moral codes and spiritual aspiration who try to wrangle about such side-facets and lose the sight of the wood in the trees.

Rule of Law

The rule of law which all democratic governments cherish, was the ideal of Rama Rajya. It was a sober ideal and, though in some respects highly puritanic, it did not lose sight of realism. It took cognizance of expediency and yet advocated some of the finest principles of government and individual and social ethics. In foreign relations its concept was remarkably modern. At first persuasion was tried and then there was the Vibhishana episode. Lanka was overrun, but it did not become an outlying province of the kingdom of Ayodhya. After the purpose of the war was served, people were given back their freedom under the rulership of a king of their own. It was a magnanimous gesture, and highly moralistic in its ideal. Only highly democratic governments of today will be able to effect, and even then, not in so short a period, such an ideal.

Ideal Government

The welfare of the subjects was the foremost consideration of the ruler. Nothing else mattered, not even the personal interests of the king. The foremost duty of the king was to see that the people were happy and content, that there was justice and the rule of law, that human considerations were not barred by social distinctions, and that, above all, public opinion was allowed to exercise its full influence. Even in that remote period it was realised that the best government was that which governed the least.

It is intriguing to note that Sri Rama should have gone to such extreme length as to renounce and banish to a hermitage his pregnant wife, the queen of the land and the first lady of the kingdom, for the sake of what might be termed today a symbolic opinion. But this, all the more, indicates how the ruler had to conform to a rigid standard of life and personal conduct, not only as thought to be proper to his own discretion, but as expected of him by his subjects. His personal life and happiness were, indeed, secondary to the inflexible rules governing his imperial life. It is extraordinary and even astounding that

a very ancient Indian kingdom had cherished and practised such a meticulous sense of propriety and its rulers had willingly subjected themselves to its adherence.

Heed the Lessons

Sri Rama's devotion to the ideal of monogamy, his refusal to remarry after Sita was banished, especially so in an age when polygamy among the upper class was more a rule than exception, is indeed magnificent. There are numerous such lessons in the Ramayana. We have even the beautifully demure and selfless example of Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, whom Valmiki did not take much notice of. Could a modern wife allow her husband to go into banishment voluntarily for fourteen long years soon after marriage, disregarding her own personal interest and desire, just for the sake of his sentimental attachment to his brother? Every page of this great book has a lesson for humanity, and if man today cares to heed even a few of them, and if he has the will and courage and strength to translate them into practice, life on earth would be much better, happier, peaceful, more meaningful, more justified.

May the blessings of Sri Rama be upon all!

Section Seven

A DIVINE GARLAND FOR SRI RAMA

RAMA RAJYA

The government of Sri Rama was an ideal one. Rama's kingdom was free from evil-doers, thieves and dacoits. People did not put any locks to the doors or bars to their windows. A bag of gold could be kept quite safe even in the highways. No calamity ever befell anyone. The aged never performed the funeral rites of the young. No one injured another. Everyone was devoted to Dharma (duty or righteousness). All people always narrated Sri Rama's stories. They always uttered "Rama, Rama." The whole world reverberated with the Name of Sri Rama.

Rain and sunshine came in due season. The air was fresh and cool. The trees were laden with plenty of fruits. There were abundant flowers of sweet fragrance. There were plenty of crops in the fields.

Every man had a long life. He had children and grandchildren. Wives were devoted to their husbands. They were chaste and pure.

All the people were hale and hearty. They were rich, contented and virtuous. They were truthful, righteous and self-controlled. They led a pure and taintless life.

The Brahmins were well versed in the Vedas. They were virtuous. They stuck to their own duties. The Kshatriyas were brave. The Vaishyas and Sudras did their Svadharma. They were free from passion, greed and envy. The twice-born were faithful to the rites and scriptures. They were truthful in their words and deeds. They had God-fearing nature. They had love for all creatures.

The troops were very strong and brave. They were fierce like fire. They never retraced their steps in battle. They guarded the ramparts well.

There were neither want nor fear nor pain anywhere. The sons were noble and manly. The daughters were pure, handsome and modest.

Every town and province had plenty of gold and corn. Fathers never lost their children, nor wives their husbands.

Poverty was unknown in Rama's kingdom. Everybody had horses, cattle, gold and grain. Nobody spoke falsehood. No one envied the wealth of others. The poorest man was richly blessed with wealth and knowledge.

Sri Rama's dominion was free from fire, flood, storm, fever, famine and disease.

Who can describe the glory of Rama's empire? Hence it was called Rama Rajya.

SVADHYAYA

(Sri Swami Sivananda)

Study of scriptures, bearing the sacred truths propounded by men of wisdom, listening to the Lilas of the Lord are never to be given up by sincere Sadhakas, at whatever stage of spiritual evolution they may be. Are you more advanced than Sri Sukadeva who was a born sage and Parivrajaka? Are you more advanced than the great sages who assembled at Naimisaranya to listen to Srimad Bhagavata being narrated by Sri Suta? Learn a lesson from these illustrious examples of great sages. Be for ever a Sadhaka. Be for ever a thirsting aspirant after spiritual knowledge. Be for ever a student. He and he alone is an old man who feels that he has learnt enough and has no need for more knowledge. He is a man dead while alive who does not feel a compelling eagerness to listen to the stories of the Lord's Lilas or to spiritual discourses. You can stave off old age and even death itself by preserving within you the youthful zeal and a devout eagerness to learn more, to practise more and to realise more deeply, the spiritual Truth, which is inexhaustible, in spite of having been extolled and expounded by millions of saints, sages and seers from times immemorial.

Moreover, forget not that on all sides you are surrounded by materialistic influences. If you are slack even for a day, the evil forces around you would find their opportunity and play havoc. The ball dropped on the top of the staircase takes less than a split-second to reach the ground, whereas it took much longer to take it up. In a moment of heedlessness, much could be lost. Life is short, time is fleeting, you cannot afford to lose an inch of the ground that you have gained with so much effort, in your battle against this formidable foe-Satan, Maya, Mara or the evil mind.

Side by side with your work, you must do Japa, meditation, study of scriptures, Sat-Vichara and Sat-Vyavahara. Do not let this monkey mind have a minute's respite. It is here that Satsanga and spiritual literature come to your great aid. They are your saviours. How many sublime thoughts are brought to your very doors by the scriptures! Study the pages of the scriptures carefully. Underline the sentences that strike you as having a direct bearing on your life. Reflect over them in your leisure moments. Thus would you find that you are able to surmount many obstacles and jump over many pitfalls. Is the mind disinclined to read these passages over and over again? That is Maya's potent weapon to put you to sleep. Beware! Are you not taking the same food over and over again? You will have to go on reading and re-reading the self-same spiritual sentences over and over again till they are indelibly engraved on the tablet of your heart, till they become part and parcel of your inner nature.

Then will a fortress of Nirodha Samskaras be erected within you. Repetition gives strength. Repetition pushes the ideas into the innermost chambers of your heart and mind. Then the ideas will percolate your subconscious mind. The evil thoughts lurking there will be scorched and annihilated. You may not even know what wonders have been effected within you. Such is the salutary influence of repeatedly studying the same spiritual text. That is why our ancestors insisted on our ceremoniously reading a text like the Gita, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, etc., daily, regularly, with faith and devotion. They will augment your inner strength. You will grow stronger. When thus the entire inner nature is transformed into divinity, then a single effort to meditate will lead you to Nirvikalpa Samadhi and superconsciousness. You will then realise God in the twinkling of an eye.

ADITYAHRIDAYAM

Prostrations to Sri Ganesha!

1. Then Muni Agastya saw Sri Rama exhausted in battle and standing in a reflective mood with Ravana in front of him ready to fight.
2. He also saw the Devas who were witnessing the fight. Muni Agastya gently approached Lord Rama and spoke the words:-
3. O Rama, the mighty armed one! Hear thou this divine secret by knowing which you will defeat your enemies in battle.
4. That is the Adityahridaya, very holy, which brings all success. It causes the destruction of the opponents. You should repeat this which is the cause of supreme auspiciousness and undying bliss.
5. It destroys all sins and bestows the best of all auspicious objects. It is the destroyer of anxiety and grief and bestower of long life.
6. Worship the sun-god who is adored by the Devas and the Asuras equally, who is full of effulgent rays, who is the Lord of this universe and who is known as Vivasvan and Bhaskara.
7. He verily represents the totality of all celestial beings. He is self-luminous and is the sustainer of all with his rays. He protects the inhabitants of all the world as well as the race of the Devas and Asuras with rays that nourish and energise.
8. He is Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Skanda, Prajapati, Mahendra, Kubera, Time, Yama, Moon and Varuna.
9. He is also the Pitris (Manes), the (eight) Vasus, the (twelve) Sadhyas, the (two) Asvins, the (forty-nine) Maruts, Manu, Vayu, Agni, the Prajas (people), the Prana, the cause of Ritus and effulgent
10. He is Aditya (son of Aditi), Savita, Surya, Khaga, Pusha, Bhanu and Gabhastiman (constituted of rays). He is endowed with beautiful colours and he causes the coming of the day.
11. He rides on seven green horses (the seven sense-organs-the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils and the tongue); he has thousands of rays; he is the destroyer of darkness; he grants auspiciousness; he removes the misfortunes of his votaries. He is the son of Mritanda.
12. He is Hiranyagarbha, the first born, the giver of heat and cold, the giver of light. He is the son of Aditi. He has fire hidden in him. His colour is pure white and he is the destroyer of cold.
13. He is the Lord of the skies, the destroyer of darkness. He is well versed in the Vedas-Rig, Sama and Yajur. He causes heavy showers of rain. He is the friend of waters. He moves along the path of Vindhyas.
14. He is round. He is like unto death. He burns everything by his heat. He is the great seer. He is the universe. He is highly effulgent. He is of red colour also. He is the cause of everything.
15. Salutations unto Thee who art the Lord of stars, planets and constellations and the origin of everything in the universe, the resplendent cause of the lustre of even the brilliant ones, the one sentient being manifest in the twelve forms of the Sun.
16. O sun, prostrations unto the eastern mountains (where thou risest) and unto the western mountains. Prostrations to the Lord of luminaries and the Lord of the day.
17. Salutations to thee who art victory, who bestows all auspiciousness. Prostrations to thee with green horses, with thousands of rays, O son of Aditi.
18. Obeisance to the sun who is terrible, brave, who causes all activities. Prostrations to thee who art great and who causes lotuses to bloom.

19. Prostrations to the sun who is effulgent, who enlightens everything and is the destroyer of all.
20. Obeisance to that Lord who destroys darkness and cold and all enemies, and the ungrateful. Prostrations to the God who is the Lord of all luminaries.
21. Prostrations to the sun who resembles the colour of burnt gold, the shaper of the world. Thou art the witness of the activities of the whole world. Thou removest darkness (of ignorance).
22. Thou art the destroyer as well as the creator of everything. Thou protectest, scorchest and rainest by Thy powerful rays.
23. This immanent Lord wakes when all beings sleep. He is himself the Agnihotra (fire-oblations) and the fruit of the performers of Agnihotra.
24. He is the Lord of everything. He is the Lord of the gods, Kratus (sacrifices) and the fruit of sacrifices. He is the Lord of all actions that are being performed in this universe.
25. He who recites this prayer in great danger, in wild forest and in great fear becomes happy and fearless, O Raghava.
26. Therefore, do thou worship the sun-god who is the Lord of gods and of this universe. You will attain success in battle having repeated this but thrice.
27. This very moment you will defeat Ravana. So saying, the great Agastya left Sri Rama's presence and disappeared.
28. Having heard this the valiant Rama lost all grief. He got ready for battle once again with a cheerful countenance.
29. Standing facing the sun he recited the prayer three times and did Achmana (sipping) thrice and remained calm.
30. Taking the bow in the hand, looking at Ravana, Rama made a strong resolve to kill Ravana immediately.
31. Then, delighted in mind to gaze on Sri Rama, feeling supremely exhilarated on perceiving the destruction of Ravana at hand, the Sun-god, standing in the midst of a host of gods, exclaimed: "Hurry up."

Thus ends the Adityahridayam.

Hari Om Tat Sat!

Om Santi Santi Santi!

आदित्यहृदयम्

ततो युद्धपरिश्रान्तं समरे चिन्तया स्थितम् । रावणं चाग्रतो दृष्ट्वा युद्धाय समुपस्थितम् ।।१ ।।
दैवतैश्च समागम्य द्रष्टुमभ्यागतो रणम् । उपगम्याब्रवीद् राममगस्त्यो भगवांस्तदा ।।२ ।।
राम राम महाबाहो श्रृणु गुह्यं सनातनम् । येन सर्वानरीन् वत्स समरे विजयिष्यसे ।।३ ।।
आदित्यहृदयं पुण्यं सर्वशत्रुविनाशनम् । जयावहं जपं नित्यमक्षयं परमं शिवम् ।।४।।
सर्वमंगलमांगल्यं सर्वपापप्रणाशनम् । चिन्ताशोकप्रशमनमायुर्वर्धनमुत्तमम् ।।५ ।।
रश्मिमन्तं समुद्यन्तं देवासुरनमस्कृतम् । पूजयस्व विवस्वन्तं भास्करं भुवनेश्वरम् ।।६ ।।
सर्वदेवात्मको ह्येष तेजस्वी रश्मिभावनः । एष देवासुरगणाँल्लोकान् पाति गभस्तिभिः ।।७ ।।
एष ब्रह्मा च विष्णुश्च शिवः स्कन्दः प्रजापतिः । महेन्द्रो धनदः कालो यमः सोमो ह्यपां पतिः ।।८ ।।
पितरो वसवः साध्या अश्विनौ मरुतो मनुः । वायुर्वह्निः प्रजाः प्राण ऋतुकर्ता प्रभाकरः ।।९।।
आदित्यः सविता सूर्यः खगः पूषा गभस्तिमान् । सुवर्णसदृशो भानुर्हिरण्यरेता दिवाकरः ।।१० ।।
हरिदश्वः सहस्रार्चिः सप्तसप्तिर्मरीचिमान् । तिमिरोन्मथनः शम्भुस्त्वष्टा मार्तण्डकोंऽशुमान् ।।११ ।।
हिरण्यगर्भः शिशिरस्तपनोऽहस्करो रविः । अग्निगर्भोऽदितेः पुत्रः शंखः शिशिरनाशनः ।।१२ ।।
व्योमनाथस्तमोभेदी ऋग्यजुःसामपारगः । घनवृष्टिरपां मित्रो विन्ध्यवीथीप्लवंगमः ।। १३ ।।
आतपी मण्डली मृत्युः पिंगलः सर्वतापनः । कविर्विश्वो महातेजा रक्तः सर्वभवोद्भवः ।।१४ ।।
नक्षत्रग्रहताराणामधिपो विश्वभावनः । तेजसामपि तेजस्वी द्वादशात्मन् नमोऽस्तु ते ।।१५।।
नमः पूर्वाय गिरये पश्चिमायाद्रये नमः। ज्योतिर्गणानां पतये दिनाधिपतये नमः ।।१६ ।।
जयाय जयभद्राय हर्यश्वाय नमो नमः ।नमो नमः सहस्रांशो आदित्याय नमो नमः ।।१७ ।।
नम उग्राय वीराय सारंगाय नमो नमः । नमः पद्मप्रबोधाय प्रचण्डाय नमोऽस्तु ते ।।१८।।
ब्रह्मशानाच्युतेशाय सूरायादित्यवर्चसे । भास्वते सर्वभक्षाय रौद्राय वपुषे नमः ।।१९ ।।
तमोघ्नाय हिमघ्नाय शत्रुघ्नायामितात्मने । कृतघ्नघ्नाय देवाय ज्योतिषां पतये नमः ।।२० ।।
तप्तचामीकराभाय हरये विश्वकर्मणे । नमस्तमोऽभिनिघ्नाय रुचये लोकसाक्षिणे ।।२१ ।।
नाशयत्येष वै भूतं तमेष सृजति प्रभुः । पायत्येष तपत्येष वर्षत्येष गभस्तिभिः ।।२२ ।।
एष सुप्तेषु जागर्ति भूतेषु परिनिष्ठितः । एष चैवाग्निहोत्रं च फलं चैवाग्निहोत्रिणाम् ।। २३ ।।
देवाश्च क्रतवश्चैव क्रतूनां फलमेव च । यानि कृत्यानि लोकेषु सर्वेषु परमप्रभुः ।।२४ ।।
एनमापत्सु कृच्छ्रेषु कान्तारेषु भयेषु च । कीर्तयन् पुरुषः कश्चिन्नावसीदति राघव ।। २५ ।।

पूजयस्वैनमेकाग्रो देवदेवं जगतपतिम् । एतत्त्रिगुणितं जप्त्वा युद्धेषु विजयिष्यति ।। २६ ।।
अस्मिन् क्षणे महाबाहो रावणं त्वं जहिष्यसि ।एवमुक्त्वा ततोऽगस्त्यो जगाम स यथागतम् ।। २७ ।।
एतच्छ्रुत्वा महातेजा नष्टशोकोऽभवत् सदा । धारयामास सुप्रीतो राघवः प्रयतात्मवान् ।।२८ ।।
आदित्यं प्रेक्ष्य जप्त्वेदं परं हर्षमवाप्तवान् । त्रिराचम्य शुचिर्भूत्वा धनुरादाय वीर्यवान् ।।२१ ।।
रावणं प्रेक्ष्य हृष्टात्मा जयार्थं समुपागमत् । सर्वयत्नेन महता वृतस्तस्य वधेऽभवत् ।।३० ।।
अथ रविरवदन्निरीक्ष्य रामं मुदितमनाः परमं प्रहृष्यमाणः ।
निशिचरपतिसंक्षयं विदित्वा सुरगणमध्यगतो वचस्त्वरेति ।।३१ ।।

।। इति आदित्यहृदयस्तोत्रम् समाप्तम् ।।

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born on the 8th September, 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshitar and several other renowned saints and savants, Sri Swami Sivananda had a natural flair for a life devoted to the study and practice of Vedanta. Added to this was an inborn eagerness to serve all an innate feeling of unity with all mankind.

His passion for service drew him to the medical career, and soon he gravitated to where he thought that his service was most needed. Malaya claimed him. He had earller been editing a health journal and wrote extensively on health problems. He discovered that people needed right knowledge most of all; dissemination of that knowledge he espoused as his own mission.

It was divine dispensation and the blessing of God upon mankind that the doctor of body and mind renounced his career and took to a life of renunciation to qualify for ministering to the soul of man. He settled down at Rishikesh in 1924, practised intense austerities and shone as a great Yogi, saint, sage and Jivanmukta.

In 1932, Swami Sivananda started the Sivanandashram. In 1936 was born The Divine Life Society. In 1948, the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy was established. Dissemination of spiritual knowledge and training of people in Yoga and Vedanta were their aim and object. In 1950, Swamiji undertook a lightning tour of India and Ceylon. In 1953, Swamiji convened a “World Parliament of Religions’. Swamiji is the author of over 300 books and has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, religions and creeds. To read Swamiji’s works is to drink at the Fountain of Wisdom Supreme. On 14th July, 1963 Swamiji entered Mahasamadhi.

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